EARLY ENGLISH ADVENTURERS IN THE EAST

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EARLY ENGLISH ADVENTURERS IN THE EAST

By

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"It is always the adventurous who accomplish great things and not the monarchs of great empires." —*Montesquieu.*

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PREFACE

THIS work covers the period which intervened between Drake's circumnavigation of the world at the close of the sixteenth century and the founding of Calcutta at the end of the seventeenth century. Those were the years in which the initial efforts were made by the English to establish themselves in the East as traders. It was, as far as this part of the world is concerned, preeminently the age of the adventurer—the merchant adventurer, if you will, but still of the true adventurer who seeks fortune by his daring enterprise and his mother wit. For varied interest and picturesqueness, there is no more fascinating period than this in the whole of the Empire's past. Tragedy and comedy mingled their elements in what was in essence one of the most romantic dramas of the world's history. Men started out to build up a commercial connexion, and they ended in laying the foundations of a dominion over alien peoples more wonderful than that of Rome in her palmiest days. How this was accomplished is told in the accompanying pages, but the author's aim has been not so much to write an exhaustive history as to bring into prominence the personalities of those who were engaged in this great work—to show what

manner of men they were, how they struggled and fought and how in many cases they died for their country in furtherance of aims which on their full fruition in subsequent years were to lead to the dominance of the British race in India. Their splendid part in the building of the Empire has been obscured by the more dazzling achievements of the men of a later generation who on an ampler stage and with more impressive accessories carried forward the story of British ascendency from crisis to crisis to its magnificent *dénouement* in the unchallenged supremacy of Britain under the ægis of the Crown. Few of those who read this work, however, will be prepared to deny that many of these humble adventurers of the seventeenth century are fully worthy of a place in the illustrious roll of men who made the Empire.

It should be stated that the work is mainly based on the splendid series of records preserved at the India Office, which supply a full history of the early life of the English in the East. In the prosecution of his researches the author received the most complete facilities from the courteous officials at the India Office Library, and he desires to avail himself of this opportunity of making due acknowledgment of their kindness. As far as the earliest years of the period dealt with are concerned he has to express his indebtedness to the useful series of transcripts edited by Mr. Wm. Foster under the authority of the Indian Government. These volumes, reproducing as they do in faithful detail the text of the older documents, many of which are illegible to any but an expert archivist, are of immense value to the writer who is dealing with any

special phase of British Indian history. The hope may be permitted that the series will be continued until all the rich store of historical fact and incident is made readily accessible to the literary student.

A. W.

London, *January*, 1914.

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CHAPTER I

The Dawn of the Empire

Drake's circumnavigation of the globe—The defeat of the Invincible Armada and its effects—Fenton's disastrous enterprise—Cavendish's voyage round the world—Expedition to the East commanded by Raymond—His ship founders in a storm off the Cape—James Lancaster succeeds to the command—His career—He visits Penang—Raids Portuguese shipping in the Straits of Malacca—He returns to England—Subsequent expedition to Brazil—Ralph Fitch and others proceed to the East overland—Fitch's account of his travels—The Dutch admiral, Houtman, conducts a voyage to the East—Its effect on English enterprise.

WHEN the long reign of Elizabeth was drawing towards its splendid close there was planted in the minds of Englishmen a mighty idea. Their conception was of an England no longer self-centred and self-contained—no mere "sceptred isle" seated in splendid isolation upon the inviolate sea, but of a power which, bursting the artificial bonds imposed by an arrogant foreign domination, would make its commercial frontiers, co-terminous with the utmost limits of the known world. Many causes contributed to produce this awakening of the national consciousness to the country's higher destinies. The voyages of the early navigators, by lifting the curtain upon the realities of that mysterious outer world which had existed hitherto to a large extent only in the imagination, created an interest in strange peoples

and unfamiliar lands. The stream of wealth which flowed into Spain and Portugal from their distant possessions also acted as a powerful stimulus to the policy of adventure. But undoubtedly it was Drake's circumnavigation of the world in 1577 which gave the first direct impulse to the national desire for a "place in the sun," to use a modern phrase. That wonderful achievement, by its incomparable audacity as an essay in seamanship, not less than by its brilliant success as an exercise in the ever-popular process of "singeing the Spaniard's beard," had thrilled the imagination of the people to an extraordinary degree. It was the electric spark which set aflame the smouldering ambitions of the nation and brought to life schemes of commercial aggrandisement which had hitherto been mere vague aspirations. It was realized that where Drake and his little handful of men had gone, and where Cavendish had followed, others equally brave and resolute could go. The Eastern seas were wide, the markets there open to all who were adventurous enough to resort to them; the native populations were not unkindly disposed. Nothing, in fact, but the barrier of an insolent claim to monopoly was interposed to the creation of wide and lucrative new openings for trade. The barrier, it is true, was a substantial one—nothing less than the armed might of the two greatest naval powers then existing; but the nation was in the mood to take whatever risks there might be in challenging this powerful combination.

Accurately interpreting the national will Elizabeth issued her defiant replies to the Spanish protests. In burning words she declined to accept the limitations by which his most Catholic Majesty sought to keep English ships from trespassing upon his Eastern preserves. Her

spirited assertions of English independence of the famous decree of Pope Alexander VI dividing the world between the Spanish and the Portuguese were amongst the most potent of the causes which led to the despatch of the Spanish Armada in 1588. And the defeat of the Armada in its turn was another important link in the chain of circumstances which associates Drake's adventure with the establishment of British power in the East. For the victory not only freed England from a foreign religious despotism, but it threw open the seas of the world to her trade. The influence which for nearly a century had made the whole of the opulent markets of the Orient a close preserve for Spain and Portugal was, in fact, fatally undermined by the three days' struggle in the English Channel and the subsequent chase. The bleaching timbers of the Spanish galleons on the Irish and Scotch coasts were the monuments of a dead era. From that time England set her face towards the East, never again to turn from it.

Though the defeat of the Spanish Armada was the real turning point in the history of English expansion overseas the keen spirit of adventure which had been aroused by Drake's circumnavigation of the world found active expression in several directions prior to the great sea victory. One enterprise which grew out of the enthusiasm of the period was an expedition organized by the Earl of Leicester under the direct patronage of Elizabeth for purposes of trade with the East by way of the Cape. To disguise the real purpose of the voyage it was given out that its object was the discovery of the North-West passage to India—that will o' the wisp which in the earlier period of the century then closing had lured so many intrepid English and Dutch navigators to splendid failures in the

icy regions of the Arctic Circle. Two ships, the *Bear*, galleon of 400 tons, and the *Edward Bonaventure*, of 300, were contributed by the Queen, and two smaller craft, of 60 tons and 40 tons respectively, furnished by private enterprise, constituted the fleet.

The command was entrusted to Edward Fenton, a scion of a well-known Nottinghamshire family, who with a spirit common in that age had abjured the easy life of a country gentleman for a career of adventure. He had sailed in Frobisher's second voyage for the discovery of the North-West passage in command of one of the vessels of the fleet. But apart from this he had had little experience in seamanship. What he lacked in this respect was supplied by the second in command, Wm. Hawkins, a member of the famous Plymouth family, who had all the genius of his race for navigation.

Unhappily, from the outset of the expedition a keen rivalry arose between the two commanders as a result of the superior attainments of the subordinate. Fenton was domineering and headstrong, and he was altogether lacking in the steadfastness which was necessary to bring to a successful conclusion so arduous and even perilous an enterprise as a voyage to the East then was.

When the fleet reached St. Helena at the end of September the eccentric admiral was seized with the fantastic idea of annexing the island and proclaiming himself king of it. The little Atlantic islet, to be rendered famous more than two centuries later by Napoleon's incarceration upon it, is an agreeable resting-place after a long voyage, but it was then far too isolated and exposed to be held for a year by any power that did not possess absolute mastery at sea. This truth was ultimately realized by Fenton,

but in abandoning his mad purpose he took up with another scheme equally futile and in its results more mischievous, Instead of prosecuting the voyage to the East he conducted a semi-piratical raid along the coast of Brazil. One of his smaller vessels suffered shipwreck off the mouth of the River Plate, and the crew manning it were seized and sent prisoners to Lima. The remaining vessels, after a brush with a Spanish fleet, directed their course to England, which they reached on June 27, 1583. When the fleet dropped anchor in the Downs Hawkins was a close prisoner in irons. He afterwards gave out that Fenton had attempted his life to prevent the exposure of his folly. Fenton's own story, of course, was different; but the fiasco in which the enterprise had resulted was too complete to be explained away by any failings of a subordinate. Fenton, after the facts had been investigated, dropped into obscurity. What became of Hawkins is an interesting problem of history. He is identified by some authorities with a notable commander in the employ of the East India Company who will be met with further on in this narrative. But the connexion has by no means been satisfactorily established. The strong probability appears to be that he shared the disrepute which attached to the expedition to the extent of not again being entrusted with an important command at sea.

In the year following Fenton's fruitless essay in exploration Raleigh conducted the first of the series of memorable expeditions which resulted in the foundation of the Colony of Virginia and the establishment of the English connexion with the North American Continent. His achievements in that region constitute a brilliant page in English history. But more to the immediate purpose of this work was the

voyage undertaken by Thomas Cavendish in 1586 to the East. Following closely the course steered by Drake nine years previously Cavendish proceeded by way of the Straits of Magellan to the Moluccas and thence home round the Cape of Good Hope. The enterprise was not less successful than was its earlier prototype. Attacks on Spanish shipping in the Eastern seas yielded a rich harvest of spoil which returned to the promoters of the enterprise a handsome dividend on their capital outlay.

Cavendish's success wiped out the effect of Fenton's failure. People once more turned their thoughts to the possibility of opening up a trade with the East. When the country had fairly settled down after the excitement of the defeat of the Armada a further adventure, having for its object the exploitation of Eastern markets, was floated. It brought to the front, in the person of James Lancaster, a man who was destined to leave his mark on the history of the development of the British Empire in the East.

Lancaster was a typical specimen of the Elizabethan sea dog. His place of birth and his ancestry are obscure, but his early years of manhood appear to have been spent in roving after the approved manner of his class. From his own statements we gather that he was brought up amongst the Portuguese, that during this period of youth he "lived among them as a gentleman, served them as a soldier, and associated with them as a merchant." He acquired a perfect knowledge of their language and as complete an insight into their character. Familiarity, in his case, markedly bred contempt. He described them as a people without truth or faith, who if they could not prevail by force would strive to win an advantage with their "deceivable tongues." His feeling was something more than the

common prejudice of the period against the two great colonizing races. It was a passion which savoured of revenge for some dire injury done. As a mental equipment for a leader in an enterprise such as that to which we have referred, the mere despatch of which gave a direct challenge to Portuguese supremacy in the East, it was not to be equalled in stimulative force. Only the burning memory of wrongs suffered could, perhaps, have carried forward to a successful issue the great movement for widening the bounds of England's commerce of which Lancaster may be said to have been the pioneer. Another qualification of value in this connexion to which Lancaster could lay claim was the fact that he had served in the Armada fight directly under Drake. What that meant to a man of the Elizabethan adventurer class we cannot perhaps at this distance of time adequately realize. But by analogy drawn from the events of a more recent period it is possible to believe that the heroes of the classic contest carried with them in their undertakings a prestige which had its influence on friend and foe alike.

Lancaster in the expedition with which we are now dealing served as second in command under George Raymond, whose appointment as "General"—to adopt the phraseology of the time—had been secured by influence amongst the little coterie of London merchants who supplied the funds. There were three ships in all equipped for this formidable task of driving a wedge into the Portuguese Eastern trade monopoly. Raymond hoisted his flag on the *Penelope*, a vessel of somewhat over 300 tons burthen; Lancaster brought to the rendezvous the *Edward Bonaventure*, the ship of 300 tons which he had commanded in the Armada conflict; while a third craft of about 60

tons, the *Merchant Royal,* was in charge of Samuel Foxcroft. It will thus be seen that the united tonnage of this fleet, as it was grandiloquently called, did not exceed that registered for a good sized pleasure yacht of our day.

The expedition sailed from Plymouth on April 10, 1591, touched at the Canary Islands about a month later, and in August dropped anchor off Saldania, in the modern Table Bay. Although the voyage had thus far not been an unduly protracted one "the disease of the sea," the terrible scurvy, had worked havoc amongst the crew. The ravages of the malady were so great that Raymond decided to send back the *Merchant Royal* with the worst of the sick cases in order that his further operations might not be hampered, and the safety of the fleet possibly imperilled by the presence of these miserable human wrecks in his vessels. The voyage was resumed by the *Penelope* and the *Edward Bonaventure* on September 8. The Cape was doubled on the following day, and almost immediately the ships fell in with one of those hurricanes which have given unenviable distinction to the great South African promontory in the annals of navigation.

In the whole range of natural phenomena there is, perhaps, nothing more awe-inspiring than one of these Atlantic tempests. Immense waves fifty or sixty feet high, whose white tip of foam accentuates their inky blackness, sweep in majestic grandeur along, conveying in their irresistible might a sense of power which seems to reduce to absolute nothingness the puny human efforts to avert the calamity which each mountainous mass of water appears to threaten. The sky overhead, thick with sombre masses of cloud, is gashed with great streaks of lightning which, playing about the masts of the labouring ship, form from time to time balls

of fire whose radiance suffuses the scene with an unearthly brilliancy. All the time the wind howls through the rigging with a shrieking noise which deafens the ear and adds another element of horror to impressions already fully charged with fateful significance.

It was into such a scene as this that the two ships were hurried on that eventful September day in 1591. For a time they kept company, but on the evening of the fourth day after leaving Table Bay those on the deck of the *Edward Bonaventure* saw an immense wave engulf the *Penelope*. As from that moment her lights were no longer visible, they drew the inference—correct as it proved—that she had foundered with all on board. The *Edward Bonaventure* continued to battle with the storm for four days. Then an appalling catastrophe occurred which seemed for the moment to have sealed the vessel's fate. About ten o'clock in the morning a flash of lightning, accompanied by a deafening crash of thunder, struck the ship. Not a single soul on board escaped the shock. Four men were killed outright, "their necks being wrung in sonder without speaking any word," as the graphic narrative of the historian of the expedition puts it. As to the other members of the crew, "some were stricken blind, others were burned in their legs and others in their breasts so that they voided blood; while others, again, were drawn out at length as though they had been racked."

Happily this was the dying effort of the storm. In a few days the conditions had so much improved that the crew were able to rest and recover from the effects of the lightning. A call at Zanzibar enabled Lancaster to take on board a pilot who knew the East Indies. He is described in the narrative of Edmund Barker, Lancaster's sub-

ordinate, as a "negro," but in all probability he was of the same race as the Indian seamen who in this era compose the lascar crews of many of our ocean-going steamers in the East. Such have for ages navigated the Indian ocean, and they no doubt constituted a numerous community at Zanzibar at the end of the sixteenth century as they do to-day.

Whatever his nationality the pilot must have proved of great service to Lancaster. Drake and Cavendish's expeditions had not touched at any part of India, nor had they utilized in their passage from the China Sea to the Atlantic the Straits of Malacca, which now are almost invariably traversed by vessels proceeding to or coming from the Far East. The pilot's local knowledge enabled Lancaster not only to test the value of the great strategic waterway which we command by the possession of Singapore, but, what for him at the time was of more moment, to make personal acquaintance with the natural advantages of Penang.

When the *Edward Bonaventure* got into the Indian Ocean the old enemy, scurvy, reappeared in an aggravated form. The crew in time was so reduced that it became imperative that a rather prolonged stay should be made in some salubrious locality. After touching at the Nicobar Islands, Lancaster sailed for Penang where he arrived at the beginning of June with his men in the last stages of weakness. The excellent air of the island was a tonic which had its effect on the enfeebled constitutions of many; but Penang then was an uninhabited waste devoid of the fresh food supplies which were so essential to the invalids. Twenty-six of the unfortunates died in a short time, amongst them Mr. Rainold Golding, "a merchant of great honesty

and much discretion." He and his fellows were the first of British birth whose bones were laid to rest in Malaya. The survivors in the *Edward Bonaventure* numbered thirty-three men and one boy, and of these "not past twenty-two were sound for labour and help and not past a third part sailors."

Serious, even desperate, as the condition of the expedition was Lancaster did not abandon hope. On the contrary he made his departure from Penang at the end of August, 1592, the starting-point of some rather audacious freebooting. Espying three ships in the Straits one morning he gave them chase and eventually overhauled them. Two, which were native craft laden with merchandise, belonging to Pegu traders, were allowed to continue their voyage; but the third ship, proving to be Portuguese owned, was confiscated. Afterwards a further small capture was made and a large vessel of 400 tons, the *St. Thomé*, only missed becoming a prize by reason of the fact that the *Edward Bonaventure* was too shorthanded to spare men to sail her. The same considerations did not prevent Lancaster from attacking a great galleon of 700 tons which a day or two later appeared on the scene, to his immense gratification. The Portuguese captain, after a show of resistance, hauled down his colours. When the ship was searched it was found to be laden with wine and a miscellaneous cargo of silks, velvets and haberdashery. It was a prize rich enough in the eyes of Lancaster to compensate for all the perils of the voyage. He now determined to retrace his course homewards. Early in December he arrived off Ceylon, and rounding the Cape in March, 1593, he dropped anchor at St. Helena in the first days of April. There he found a poor wretch named

Segar, who had been put ashore in an apparently dying condition by the captain of the *Merchant Royal*, on the rather heartless assumption that the man's chances of life were greater on land than on board ship. For eighteen months the unfortunate fellow led a Crusoe-like existence on the island, seeing no human being. When he was found he was apparently in good bodily health, but long isolation from his fellow-men had so weakened his faculties that he was unable to bear the strain of association with his old messmates. Within a month of leaving St. Helena he died, a victim to excessive joy, if Barker's theory is correct.

The history of the *Edward Bonaventure* after leaving St. Helena was unfortunate. Lancaster, instead of proceeding home, went off to the West Indies in search, it would seem, of further adventures. His crew, who had had more than their fill of this roving life, mutinied, but were afterwards brought sufficiently into submission to enable Lancaster to go on a cruise off the Gulf of Mexico. In November, 1593, the *Edward Bonaventure* was driven ashore on one of the islands in that region, and was there abandoned. Lancaster and his principal lieutenant, Barker, took passage home in a French ship which, fortunately for them, was anchored at one of the islands in the vicinity of the wreck. Ultimately they landed at Rye on May 24, 1594, after an absence from their native country of more than three years.

To a great extent the voyage had been a disastrous one. Two of the largest vessels were lost, only a miserable remnant of the crews originally embarked on the fleet lived to return to England, and apart from a comparatively small sum which Lancaster obtained by trafficking in the

West Indies with the despoiled cargo of the captured Portuguese galleon there was nothing to show for the considerable outlay on the venture. The only substantial asset was a fund of experience of Eastern navigation, which, however valuable from the larger standpoint of national commercial development was of small account in the calculations of merchants seeking a profitable new field for the utilization of their capital. Still, the spirit of enterprise in England at that period was such that men were found ready to employ Lancaster afresh in a speculative undertaking overseas. Only five months after he had returned from the Eastern voyage we find him once more on his native element, the commander of a new fleet of three vessels equipped for a perilous foray on the Portuguese possessions in South America. The aggregate tonnage of this little squadron did not reach 500, yet such was the spirit of the man and his fine contempt for the Portuguese that he made directly for the Brazilian port of Pernambuco, which was then one of the chief centres of Portuguese trade in the West and as such heavily fortified. By a display of cool daring and resourcefulness which was proof alike against the feeble defensive measures and the crooked diplomacy of the local Portuguese authorities he compelled the submission of Recife, the port of Pernambuco, extracted a heavy ransom in the shape of treasure and goods, and with heavily laden ships made for home. arriving at Blackwall in July, 1595. It was a purely piratical expedition which cannot be justified on any modern principle, but the Elizabethan age was not a fastidious one in these matters. In the then near past the country had suffered grievous wrongs at the hands of both Portugal and Spain. For long years the nation

writhed under them with only occasional opportunities for reprisals. Now that the opening of the seas had given the opportunity of hitting back effectively neither the Government nor the common people was disposed to look too critically upon exploits which, besides paying off old scores, brought a refreshing stream of wealth in their train. So the indignant protests which in due course came from the peninsula were drowned in a chorus of popular acclamation amid which Lancaster retired for a period to the background to enjoy a well earned respite from active command.

Meanwhile, the old idea of commercial expansion in the East was quietly fermenting in the mind of the merchant class, which in the closing years of the sixteenth century had become perhaps more powerful than at any previous period in English history. The formation of the English Turkey Company in 1579 had opened up an avenue of independent trade with the near East, to the immense widening of the knowledge of the countries of Asia.

Constantinople was then one of the principal emporiums of the globe. Into its portals came caravans from all parts of Asia, bearing the products of the looms of Persia, India and China, and the spices of the remoter regions of the Eastern seas. The great world of the Orient, which had hitherto been known in Britain mainly through the refracted medium of Venetian, and Spanish and Portuguese eyes, now became more or less familiar by the direct narratives of Englishmen who had entered the East by its Mediterranean door.

As early as 1583 five Englishmen, Ralph Fitch, James Newberry, J. Eldred, W. Leedes, and J. Story, started out from Tripolis in Syria on a tour in Asia, which even to-day would be considered remarkable. From Tripolis they pro-

ceeded to Aleppo and thence by caravan to a town on the Euphrates. They travelled down the Euphrates to the head of the Persian Gulf, where Eldred left the party.

Fitch, with his three companions, afterwards went to Ormuz, where the Portuguese, who wanted no poachers on their preserves, promptly clapped the party in prison. Eventually they were shipped off to Goa to be dealt with by the Viceroy, whose seat of authority was at the Western India port. They continued in captivity until the end of the year when Story, having appealed to the local authorities in a tender place by turning monk, secured the release of the entire party. Two sureties had to be found for the good behaviour of the wanderers, and these were forthcoming in the persons of two Jesuits, one of whom, it is interesting to note, was Thomas Stevens, of New College, Oxford, who arrived in Goa by way of the Cape in 1579, and consequently was probably the first Englishman who ever visited India.

Newberry settled down in Goa, but Fitch and Leedes, finding the life of the Portuguese city irksome, contrived to escape into native territory. After various vicissitudes Leedes took service under the Great Mogul and disappears from history at the court of that monarch. Fitch continued his travels, visiting in turn Ceylon, Bengal, Pegu, Siam, Malacca and other parts of Malaya. He returned home overland in April, 1591, after an odyssey which had brought him into contact with many of the centres of Eastern life from the Mediterranean to the China Sea.

An account written by Fitch of his prolonged wanderings is to be found in the useful pages of Hakluyt. It is a matter-of-fact narrative in which the utilitarian rather than the romantic side of the tour is presented. As a

merchant Fitch wrote for merchants, and he did not write in vain. His information about the trade of the many Asiatic lands that he had visited aroused an interest in commercial development in the East which penetrated to every class of Society.

Fitch himself must have been an interesting figure in the little world in which he moved in the years immediately following his return from his travels. It is quite conceivable that at some time or another he met Shakespeare on terms of friendly intimacy. London then was quite a small place, not much more extensive than the "one square mile" which constitutes the City of London as we know it to-day. At its wine shops over the cup of sack or Gascony the citizens of the time were wont to discuss the latest news which filtered in from abroad and to listen to the experiences of those who had first-hand knowledge of foreign lands. The great dramatist, ever on the look-out for local colour, would have quickly discovered Fitch and drawn upon his vast store of out of the way knowledge for those wonderful studies of human nature which still hold a unique place in the world's literature. There is, at all events, a direct suggestion that Shakespeare was well acquainted with Fitch's story in the passage in Act I, scene 3 of *Macbeth*, where a character is made to say "Her husband to Aleppo gone, master of the *Tiger*." It was the *Tiger* on which Fitch and his companions voyaged to the Eastern Mediterranean, and it was at Aleppo, as has already been stated, that they disembarked preparatory to commencing their Asiatic wanderings. The commercial significance of Fitch's travels, however, completely overshadows any literary interest that they may possess. His narrative lifted the veil on the mysterious East, if less

dramatically than Drake and Cavendish's voyages had done, with far greater effect. The best markets were indicated, the profits to be made there were set forth with the precision of an expert, and, above all, the truth was emphasized that to the bold and strong there were great possibilities in the regions in which the Portuguese and the Spaniards and, as regards Persia and the nearer East, the Venetians had previously exercised a practical monopoly.

Lancaster's unfortunate voyage, which followed almost immediately upon Fitch's return, rather damped the ardour of the mercantile classes for Eastern adventures, more especially as an expedition sent out to China in 1596, under the command of Captain Benjamin Wood, also ended in disaster; but the setback was only temporary.

As time went by, interest was re-kindled by evidence which came to hand, notably from the English ambassador at the Spanish Court, of the splendid field which was ready for the occupation of English merchants in the countries of the Orient. A decisive turn was given to the arguments in favour of a further effort to tap the Eastern markets when the news reached England in 1597 of the remarkable success of the voyage made to the East by a fleet of Dutch ships under the command of Cornelius Houtman. This expedition, which laid the foundation of Dutch power in the Eastern Archipelago, carried a warning for England which was not to be disregarded. On all hands it was recognized that the time had come for English merchants to secure a share of the Eastern trade if they were not to be altogether supplanted by their energetic Dutch rivals. The closing years of the sixteenth century were a period of energetic preparation and eager anticipation in London

mercantile circles. Out of this travail was born with the new century the historic East India Company, an institution which, beyond any other purely private organization, in the centuries following moulded the destinies of the British Empire.

CHAPTER II

How Lancaster initiated the Eastern Trade

Formation of the East India Company—Elizabeth grants a charter—Sir Edmund Michelborne and Lancaster rivals for the command of the Company's first expedition—The latter appointed—John Davis of Sundridge proceeds with the fleet—Arrival of the expedition at Acheen—Favourable reception by the King—Portuguese opposition—Successful raid on Portuguese shipping by Lancaster—Farewell interview with the King—The fleet visits Bantam and returns home—Successful results of the voyage

IT is fair to surmise that when the plain London citizens who were the principal moving spirits in the formation of the East India Company sat down to draw up a scheme for their organization they had only a dim perception of the character of the enterprise upon which they were embarked. Their last thought probably was political aggrandisement and territorial sovereignty. Their calculations were in terms of the ledger and their ambitions took shape in the phrases of the letter book. To buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest was their guiding principle. Yet that is not to say that no higher motive than a sordid love of gain mingled in the alloy of their project. The Elizabethan spirit of ardent patriotism, expressed largely in a hatred of Spain and Portugal as the

chosen instruments of Rome, though not at the white heat of a decade earlier, still burned with steady brilliancy in the Englishman's breast. It was peculiarly a beacon light in the City of London, where more than elsewhere in the country, perhaps, there was a clearer appreciation of all that an independent England implied in the material sphere and where intimate contact with the Court lent a natural breadth and spaciousness to men's views on external politics. In such an environment there would naturally be a full recognition of the fact that the religious phase of the struggle which had ended so decisively in 1588 needed a further effort for the vindication of the nation's rights to a trade which would not be fettered by the arbitrary decrees of a hated foreign ascendancy. To the English mercantile community the mere assertion of a right to monopolize the trade of the East on the part of Portugal and Spain appeared as an affront to the dignity of the country which must be met by effectual steps to establish a distinctively English trade in the prohibited regions. Thus reasoning they brought to their practical deliberations a spirit of patriotic zeal which had its influence in shaping the enterprise and giving to it the national character it ultimately largely assumed.

Few of those busy city men whose hurrying feet on week days re-echo through the dingy purlieus of Founder's Court in Lothbury, in the heart of the City of London, are aware that within a few yards of that spot was witnessed the birth of the organization which established the foundations of British power in the East. The old Founder's Hall, which was the cradle of the mighty British Indian Empire, went the way of many other famous buildings in the Great Fire of London, but the tradition remains,

and this stuffy little alley will always be a hallowed spot to all Britons who find inspiration in the memories of the past.

The beginnings of this enterprise had a strangely modern character. Just as to-day when some great national effort is to be made the initial step is a meeting of personages of influence presided over by the Lord Mayor, so on a late September day in 1599 a gathering of leading merchants and men of light and leading in Court circles assembled in Founder's Hall, with the chief magistrate of the year—Sir Stephen Soame—in the chair, to give public sanction to the project for establishing trade relations with the East. Zeal for the undertaking must have run high, for the subscription list which emanated from the meeting reached a total of £30,000—a very large sum for those none too affluent times. Subsequently the amount was raised to £72,000.

With this solid backing the adventurers approached Elizabeth with a formal application for a charter of incorporation. George, Earl of Cumberland, headed the signatories to the petition, who were 215 in number and included, in addition to many influential merchants, a substantial body of noblemen and personages of distinction in the public life of the country. The Queen, whose spirit of adventure was still active in spite of advancing years and infirmities, had no difficulty in acceding to a request so thoroughly in harmony with the traditions of her reign. On January 24, 1600, letters patent were issued to "the Governor and Company of the Merchants of London trading to the East Indies" authorizing them to carry on their operations, and approving their choice of James Lancaster to act as their "Governor and General" in the

particular enterprise upon which they were about to embark.

Lancaster's selection for the supreme office, though plainly indicated by his skill as a seaman and his exceptional knowledge of the region which the promoters had marked out for their operations, was not made without a struggle. He had a rival, a rather formidable one, in Sir Edward Michelborne, a gentleman adventurer who had served under the Earl of Essex in the Island Voyage of 1597, and who, possessing Court influence, was strongly recommended for the position by the Lord Treasurer. The shrewd city merchants in whose hands the arrangements for the voyage were placed, with a lively recollection probably of Fenton's disastrous enterprise, declined to entertain the proposal on the sensible ground that the business in hand was more suitable for one of their own class than for a Court favourite. Michelborne was so incensed at the decision that he declined to pay the subscription for which he had made himself responsible, and his name was in consequence removed from the Company's roll. We shall meet him again a prominent actor on the stage of Eastern adventure, but for the time being he may be allowed to drop into the background nursing his grievance.

The discriminating care which was shown by the directors in their choice of a commander was reflected in the other arrangements for the voyage and notably in the selection of men for the subordinate commands. By far the most famous of these lieutenants of Lancaster was John Davis, of Sundridge, in Devon, the brilliant navigator whose name will ever be associated with the efforts made in the latter part of the sixteenth century to discover a North-West passage to India. Sir Clements Markham, in

his introduction to the volume of Davis's Voyages in the Hakluyt Society's publications, states that "as a seaman combining scientific knowledge and skilled pilotage with the qualities of a fearless and determined explorer John Davis stands foremost among the navigators of the great Queen." This reputation was earned by an almost continuous service at sea from the day in 1585 when he sailed on his first voyage of discovery to the frozen North. Three separate expeditions were conducted by him in this direction, and he served besides with the Earl of Cumberland off the Azores in 1585 and with Cavendish on his voyage to the South Seas in 1591. But the achievement which helped to recommend him most to the promoters of the enterprise with which we are dealing was the successful piloting of the Dutch Admiral Houtman's fleet on its memorable voyage to the East in 1597. His appointment on that occasion was due to the recommendation of the Earl of Essex, and there was afterwards a suspicion on the part of the Dutch that he had been sent by his noble patron to spy upon their movements. It is an unworthy suggestion, not supported by the smallest evidence. Davis discharged his duties to his Dutch employers honourably and well. It was, indeed, largely to his bravery and resourcefulness that the ship in which he sailed was saved from capture on the occasion of a treacherous attack made upon it off Acheen, in Sumatra. His narrative of Houtman's voyage, which is the classic account of that undertaking, represents him as a shrewd and intelligent observer, as a seaman wedded to his profession and as a man zealous for the reputation of the Western races.

Five ships composed the fleet which Lancaster had under his command. They were not in any sense homogeneous,

being in fact a miscellaneous collection of vessels acquired from various quarters. The largest ship—the admiral's—was the *Mare Scourge* of 600 tons, which was built by the Earl of Cumberland for the special purpose of cruising against the Spaniards, and which was bought from him by the adventurers for £3,700. Re-christened the *Red Dragon* it took its place at the head of the line, a taut and seaworthy craft enough, but one which was perhaps better adapted by its construction for work in the colder latitudes of the north than for tropical navigation. A picture of this vessel has come down to us. Its outlines are familiar from the reproductions of the famous Armada tapestries, which were not the least of the treasures which perished in the fire which destroyed the old Houses of Parliament. The enormously high stern, with its ornate poop suggestive of quite spacious cabin accommodation, the low waist and the narrow jutting prow, with its elaborate figure-head, are features which we recognize as characteristic of the Elizabethan "sea scourge." Next in point of size to the *Red Dragon* was the *Hector*, of 300 tons, then the *Ascension*, of 260 tons, followed by the *Susan*, of 240 tons, with the little *Guest*, of 130 tons, in the wake, discharging the rôle of a victualling ship.

The lading of the ships was a matter of careful forethought. A mixed cargo of iron, wrought and unwrought, lead, Devonshire kersies of all cotton and Norwich woollen goods, was embarked with a variety of articles which were thought to be suitable for presentation to native potentates. Merchants were allotted to each vessel to take charge of the goods on the voyage and superintend their sale at the Eastern ports. The better to promote the enterprise Lancaster was entrusted with six letters from Queen

Elizabeth for presentation to Asiatic princes in whose dominions he might find himself. The communications were identical in terms, and there was a blank left for the name of the royal recipient to be filled in. As a final touch to the equipment each unit of the fleet was provided with twelve streamers, two flags and one ancient, so that on ceremonial occasions there might be a fitting display of decorative bunting. The flag flown in the place of honour was the broad cross of St. George. More than a hundred years were to elapse before the first Union flag appeared in the Company's vessels and twice that length of time ere the Union Jack was hoisted on them.

On a cold dull day in 1601 the five ships, which had been anchored off Woolwich, dropped down the river on their eventful voyage. Contrary winds were encountered, so that some weeks elapsed before those on board caught what was, for many of them, their last glimpse of the white cliffs of England. A successful run was made as far as the coast of Guinea, where there was a diversion in the shape of the capture of a Portuguese vessel which had the ill fate to sail into the track of the fleet. From her hold were taken 146 butts of wine—Canary, no doubt—and 176 jars of oil, with sundry hogsheads and casks of meal.

From Africa Lancaster stood over to the coast of Brazil to catch the favouring trade wind which he hoped to find to help him on his voyage. When off Cape St. Augustine on July 20 the *Guest* was dismantled and abandoned. The step was rendered necessary by the ravages of the dread scurvy, which had decimated the crews of some of the vessels. A course was now laid for the Cape, but baffling winds so delayed the fleet that it was not until September 9 that the shelter of Table Bay was reached. None too soon

did the vessels drop anchor in this veritable harbour of refuge. As the ships had progressed on the voyage the scurvy had tightened its terrible grip on the unfortunate crews. On the *Hector*, the *Susan* and the *Ascension*, the conditions were such that there were not enough men to do the routine duties of the ships, and Lancaster had to send his own men on board to furl the sails. The *Red Dragon* had enjoyed a practical immunity from sickness, for the simple reason that Lancaster had taken a supply of lemon water on board and had served it out regularly to his men. He must have understood its qualities as an anti-scorbutic, but the full value of the fruit can hardly have been realized, for the melancholy tale of disease continued long years after this period.

It was often at or near the Cape that the fell malady reached its highest point of destructive energy. Out of that circumstance probably grew the grisly tradition of the Carlmilhan, the phantom ship which in the watches of the night appeared with its ghastly crew lying prone in agonized attitudes about its decks or hanging in the awful realism of death over the bulwarks to carry terror into the minds of the superstitious seamen. The history of the sea at this period has, at all events, a number of well accredited cases in which an entire crew perished, and the vessel, deprived of intelligent direction, was carried aimlessly about until some day the pitiful truth was revealed to a passing ship which had put off to ascertain the character of the derelict. Not without cause, indeed, was the great African promontory given in the first instance the designation Cape of Torments. The horrors of one of the most painful of diseases were there associated with Nature's elemental manifestations in their most terrifying aspect,

while the changed character of the heavens—the fading out of the old constellations and the appearance of new ones—seemed to give a further and sinister significance to portents already big with the decrees of Fate.

We catch something of the relief with which this dreaded region was left behind in the increased liveliness of the narrative of Lancaster's voyage as the vessels approach the Indian Ocean. But death still dogged the course of the fleet. At Madagascar there expired on the *Red Dragon* "the master's mate, the preacher and the surgeon with some ten other common men," and as the captain of the *Ascension* was going ashore in his boat to the funeral of the departed he and his boatswain's mate, who accompanied him, were slain by a shot from one of the guns fired as a ceremonial salute in accordance with the custom followed on such occasions. "So they that went to see the burial were both buried there themselves." The narrator adds that those who succumbed at Madagascar "mostly died of the flux, which in our opinion came with the waters we drank"—a highly probable circumstance.

Quitting Madagascar, Lancaster steered directly for the Straits of Malacca. Assisted by the favouring south-west monsoon he made a good passage to Acheen, off which port his fleet dropped anchor on June 5. In selecting this spot he no doubt followed the advice of Davis, whose experience with Houtman's fleet taught him that this was one of the most important centres of the spice trade, which was then, to a large extent, the staple Eastern commodity. The capture of a share of this trade was the primary object of the expedition. An immediate effect of the Dutch intrusion into the East had been to raise the price of Indian pepper in the English market from 3*s*. to 8*s*. per pound,

and there was, therefore, a very strong reason for establishing at the earliest moment independent relations with the chief sources of supply.

Acheen, on the north-east coast of Sumatra, is chiefly familiar to the present generation as the scene of an apparently unending war between the Dutch and the local Malay power, arising out of the unwillingness of the natives to accept the yoke imposed permanently upon them by the arrangement made between Great Britain and Holland nearly a century ago, under which, roughly speaking, British rights in Sumatra were renounced in exchange for a like renunciation on the part of the Dutch Government of any title to Singapore or to political influence in the Peninsular States. But many years before that struggle commenced—long, indeed, before Europeans appeared in force in the East—Acheen had been an important commercial centre by reason of its strategic position at the northern end of the Straits of Malacca and its proximity to the principal spice-growing districts in that region. The Dutch had thought so well of it that they had promptly established a factory there, and amongst the first to welcome Lancaster were two Hollanders, who had been left behind to look after the Dutch interests. From them Lancaster learned not only that the King was well disposed to strangers, but that he held in especial estimation the English, on account of their great victory over the Spaniards in the Armada fight, about which he appeared to be well informed.

The course of events showed that the Dutch visitors to the English fleet had not exaggerated the impression made upon this distant Eastern potentate's mind by the memorable conflict of 1588. Curiosity, mingled no doubt with a feeling of self-interest, prompted him to receive with open

arms the representatives of a power which had successfully combated a nation in intimate alliance with the Portuguese, whose might had wrested from the Malays the principal seat of their power and whose heavy hand had been for generations oppressively felt throughout the length and breadth of the Straits and the islands of the Eastern seas wherever members of the Malay race were settled. Whatever his motives, his reception of Lancaster was princely.

When the English commander landed on the third day after his arrival the King sent to the landing-place " great elephants with many drums, trumpets and streamers with much people " to escort him to Court. The biggest of the elephants was about thirteen or fourteen feet high and " had a small castle like a coach upon its back covered with crimson velvet. In the middle thereof was a great bason of gold and a piece of silk exceedingly richly wrought to cover it." This contrivance was thoughtfully furnished to provide a suitable depository for Elizabeth's letter. There the precious missive was accordingly put with due ceremony. Lancaster himself took his place in stately isolation upon another of the huge animals with running footmen on each side. In this imposing way he and his personal escort of thirty men made their way through streets packed with an eager wondering crowd to the palace.

On the arrival of the party at the palace the King tendered the Englishmen a welcome which was almost effusively courteous. Probably he had foreknowledge of the presents which were on the way to him from the royal Elizabeth. Nothing, at all events, was allowed to delay the important ceremony of their presentation. The King had no reason to complain of either the attractiveness or the

intrinsic value of the gifts. They included "a bason of silver with a fountain in the midst of it weighing 205 ounces, a great standing cup of silver, a rich looking-glass and headpiece with a plume of feathers, a case of very fine daggers, a rich wrought embroidered belt to hang a sword on, and a fan of feathers." The King immediately pounced upon the fan, "and caused one of his women to fan him therewithall, as a thing that most pleased him of all the rest." Later the visitors were entertained at a banquet, where they ate off plates of precious metal and were entertained with dancing damsels, "richly attired and adorned with bracelets and jewels." Finally, Lancaster and his chief lieutenants were invested with robes of honour and equipped each with a kris, the Malay dagger, which is a symbol of authority. In this honorific fashion they were dismissed to their ships.

The Elizabethen letter, which with so much ceremony had been conveyed to the Acheen prince, was a highly characteristic effusion embodying the royal sentiments as to the establishment of a trade connexion with the English Company. She promised the King that he should be very well served and better contented than he had previously been with the Portugals and Spaniards, the enemies of England, who "only and none else of these regions," the Queen went on to say, "have frequented those your, and the other kingdoms of the East: not suffering that the other nations should doe it, pretending themselves to be monarchs and absolute lords of all these kingdoms and provinces as their own conquest and inheritance as appeareth by their lofty title in their writings." Then came the pith of the document—an application for a site for a factory and for protection for those who might be left to manage it.

The note struck by the Queen's disdainful sentences about Portuguese and Spanish pretensions awakened a congenial echo in the heart of the Malay prince, who had only too good cause to appreciate their truth. But, though all graciousness about the desirability of an alliance with so high and mighty a potentate as Elizabeth, he was in no hurry to make the definite concession which was asked. The proposal was referred by him for consideration to two of his principal officials—"one the chief bishop of the realm and the other a member of the ancient nobility." Meanwhile the Englishmen were granted a general freedom to trade—a favour which, while it committed the King to nothing, was calculated to enrich his coffers both directly and indirectly.

Lancaster speedily found that trading at Acheen, on anything like profitable terms, was practically impossible. He had been led by Davis to expect that he would be able to purchase pepper—the staple commodity—at a price of four Spanish reals of eight the hundred pounds weight, but the actual cost was about five times that sum. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that he "grew daily full of thought how he should lade his ships." To increase his perplexities a Portuguese ambassador appeared on the scene, primed with instructions to do his best to defeat the Englishmen's schemes. His first move was to make a bold demand to the King for a factory and for a site for a fort at the entrance to the river for its security. The insolence of the request aroused the ire of the prince.

Addressing the Portuguese envoy, according to the narrator of Lancaster's voyage, he said: "Hath your master a daughter to give that he is so careful of the preservation of my country? He shall not need to be at so great a

charge as the building of a fort, for I have a fit house about two leagues from the city which I will spare him for a factory where his people shall not need to fear enemies, for I will protect them."

The royal sarcasm hit its mark. The Portuguese ambassador retired in dudgeon to concoct new plans for the discomfiture of the hated English.

From this point the struggle became a contest of wits between the wily Portuguese on the one hand and the bluff Englishman on the other, with the Kin in the background an interested and gleeful spectator of the combat. Lancaster's early association with the Portuguese and his perfect knowledge of their ways gave him an immense initial advantage in the conflict. He knew that it was no good wasting time in attempting to counter intrigues on the spot, the ramifications of which, in the absence of local experience, he would be powerless to follow. For him, situated as he was, the line to take was the bold one of carrying the war into the enemy's country—in other words, to raid the Portuguese shipping in the Straits. He was the more disposed to adopt this course because of the now obvious impossibility of obtaining a cargo on reasonable terms. But though he saw his plan of campaign plainly marked out he only too clearly realized that if the Portuguese envoy left a warning would be given to Portuguese shipping, and he would have but small chance of making any valuable captures. After thinking the matter over he decided to enlist the aid of the King in furthering his projects. As events proved this was an easy matter.

The prince had formed a great liking for Lancaster. The seaman's frank, downright manner, with the impression of force of character which was conveyed in his control of

the men under his command, appealed to the instinctive love of manliness which exists deep down in the Malay mind. There was, too, a community of sentiment in sport, which peeped out when, as often happened, the prince and his guest foregathered over a display of cock-fighting, which is the national pastime of the Malays. So that when the English commander approached the King with a request that he would take measures to detain the Portuguese ambassador until the English ships had got well clear of the port he met with a prompt acquiescence in his scheme.

"Well," said the King, and laughed, "thou must bring me a fair Portugall maiden when thou returnest and then I am pleased."

No time was lost by Lancaster in putting his plans into execution. A few days later he was at sea, on the look-out for a big Portuguese galleon of whose likely advent he had news from friends in port. She duly appeared on the scene on about the day expected, October 3, making a gallant sight as, with all sails set, she came with a favouring wind down the Straits. The English fleet, immediately on sighting her, stood across to her and on getting into range commenced to fire. The fight was hot until a volley from the *Red Dragon* brought down the galleon's mainmast and put her out of action. She proved to be an exceedingly rich prize of 900 tons—one of the largest ships sailing the seas in those days. Her holds were stuffed full of merchandise of all descriptions, and there was found on her besides much valuable loot in the shape of jewels and plate and miscellaneous property. The riches were so extensive, indeed, as almost to be embarrassing. When the holds of the four ships had been filled to the last corner there was still left a residue sufficiently large to cause Lancaster much

perplexed thought as to its disposal. But he was not in the mood to allow any small difficulties to interfere with his thorough enjoyment of the situation in which he now found himself. By a single stroke he had satisfactorily settled what had at one time seemed likely to prove the insoluble problem of how to fill his ships and make the voyage a financial success. That the desired end had been gained by a privateering raid on another power, if it concerned him at all, probably added a zest to the memory of his achievement, since by its means he had struck another heavy blow at his ancient enemy.

Lancaster now determined to make his way home by way of the Sunda Straits. Experience had shown him that Acheen was a hopeless place for business in present circumstances, and that the real centres of the spice trade was at Priaman to the southward on the eastern coast of Sumatra and at Bantam on the island of Java. It was clearly in this direction that the permanent establishment could be most profitably located, more especially as the Dutch had made Bantam their headquarters.

On his return to Acheen Lancaster sought an audience of the King to announce his decision to leave. The monarch received him jovially. One of his first questions to his visitor was whether he had forgotten the most important business of his recent raid—that little affair of the Portuguese maiden. Entering into the spirit of the jest, Lancaster seriously assured his majesty that his wishes would most certainly have been complied with but for one thing, there was no one found to be worthy of the high honour. "There withal the King smiled and said, 'If there be anything in my kingdom may pleasure thee I would be glad to gratify thy good will.'"

A day or two later the formal farewell audience took place. The King handed over to Lancaster his reply to Elizabeth's letter, in which with a wealth of Oriental hyperbole, he granted freedom of trade to the subjects of "the Sultana who doth rule in the Kingdom of England, France, Ireland, Holland and Friesland," and expressed the wish that the Deity would "continue that Kingdom and Empire long in prosperity." Some presents to accompany this missive were entrusted to Lancaster with a ruby ring for himself.

There was then a pause, and Lancaster was about to take his leave when the King broke in with a strange question.

"'Have you the Psalms of David extant among you? he asked.

"The General answered, 'Yea, and we sing them daily.'

"Then said the King, 'I and the rest of these nobles about me will sing a Psalm to God for your prosperity,' and so they did it very solemnly. And after it was ended the King said—

"'I would hear you sing another Psalm, although in your own language.'

"So there being in the company some twelve of us we sung another Psalm and after the Psalm was ended the General took his leave of the King."

With this delightful scene Lancaster's sojourn at Acheen may be said to have terminated, for a few hours later he was at sea again.

With a passing call at Priaman for a supply of pepper awaiting him there, Lancaster proceeded to Bantam, which port he reached in the early days of December. Bantam, like Acheen, was a small Malay principality, a fragment of the larger sovereignty which once wielded sway over a

considerable part of Malaya. The ruling prince at the time of Lancaster's visit was a lad of ten or eleven years of age. He was, of course, a mere figurehead. The real power was vested in a council of officials, who were as grasping as most Orientals of their class were at that time, but who were sufficiently sensible of the advantages of expanded trade to place no direct obstacles in the visitors' way.

Many days had not elapsed after the arrival of the English fleet before a position had been occupied ashore and a brisk trade was being done in the commodities with which Lancaster's ships were laden. At that period, and indeed throughout its history as a European trading centre in the East, the port of Bantam had a very bad reputation for unhealthiness. "That stinking stew" was the phrase applied to it in one of the earliest letters of the English factors, and that the designation was deserved is shown by the terrible mortality lists with which the first records are interspersed. The most prominent of the early victims was John Middleton, Lancaster's second in command, a man of great experience, who, though less known than his brother Henry, who we shall meet with presently in a prominent position, was an equally able and enterprising seaman. Middleton's death warned Lancaster not to linger unduly at Bantam. When, therefore, he had dispatched a pinnace to the Moluccas to open up trade in that quarter and had settled a staff in the factory under William Starkey he on February 20, 1603, sailed for England.

The return voyage nearly ended in disaster. In the dreaded region of the Cape the fleet met a terrific storm in which the vessels were battered about for several days without intermission. At length the carrying away of the rudder of the *Red Dragon* appeared to seal the fate of that vessel.

The *Hector* stood by the now almost derelict ship with the object of taking off the crew as the occasion might offer. But Lancaster, with the indomitable spirit of a true son of the sea, flatly declined to listen to any suggestion of abandonment. Proceeding to his cabin he calmly indited a letter to the directors intimating that he would strive to save the ship and goods, but that he could not indicate where they should send a pinnace to look for him as he was at the mercy of the wind and waves. "And thus fare you well (he wrote), desiring God to send us a merry meeting in this world if it be His good will and pleasure. The passage to the East Indies lieth in 62½ degrees by the N.W. on the American side." The letter was delivered by some means not disclosed to the *Hector* with final instructions to its commander to proceed direct home. Night fell with no mitigation of the storm and with an increase every hour of the peril of the vessel owing to the exhaustion of the crew. When morning broke and the *Hector* was still visible, not a great distance off, Lancaster uttered an exclamation of impatience. "These men regard no commission (order)," he said with a frown to the bystanders. But, remarks the writer of the narrative, "the master was an honest and a good man and loved the General well and was loth to leave him in so great distress." Happily about this period the storm moderated sufficiently to allow of a temporary rudder being fixed, and with this device the *Red Dragon* was enabled to crawl along her course until opportunity permitted of the adjustment of a new rudder. After this no incident of importance occurred to mar the voyage, which may be said to have terminated when the ships dropped anchor in the Downs on September 11, 1603.

Financially the enterprise had been a magnificent success. The fleet brought with it 1,030,000 pounds of pepper, on which there was an enormous profit. Besides this element of gain there were other items which ran the total returns up to a very large sum. But over and above the immediate material benefit which the venture secured was the extremely valuable experience which it afforded of the Eastern trade. The best course for ships had been discovered, the leading spice markets had been located and tested, knowledge had been gained of the customs of the native traders and, what was perhaps most important, advertisement had been given in a striking form of the fact that England was a competitor in the race for commercial supremacy in Eastern seas. It was natural in such circumstances that Lancaster's homecoming should have partaken somewhat of the character of the triumphant return of a victorious general, that the populace should have acclaimed him, that the City should have fêted him, and that as a coping stone to the pyramid of honour the sovereign should have knighted him. He was completely deserving of these tributes not only because he discharged a difficult enterprise with conscientious thoroughness, but for the reason that he gave an example in leadership and a lesson in patriotism which were followed by those who immediately succeeded him, to the great enhancement of the reputation of his countrymen and to the ultimate glory of the Indian Empire of Britain, which was built on the foundations which he so well and truly laid.

CHAPTER III

A Fight to a Finish

James I gives Michelborne a licence to trade in the East—Michelborne's voyage to the East with Davis as chief lieutenant—Acts of piracy off the Javan coast—English ships fall in with a Japanese pirate vessel—Sudden attack by the Japanese—A terrific combat—Davis is slain—A happy thought—Defeat and extermination of the Japanese—Michelborne returns home

IN the period of Lancaster's absence on his voyage the great Elizabeth had passed to her rest. Her successor, James I, was to a certain extent in the position of the king who knew not Joseph. He was not only lacking in his predecessor's enthusiasm for the cause of trade expansion in the East, but his mind failed to grasp the essential conditions on which a policy of the kind could then be successfully prosecuted. On no other basis than as a monopolistic power—as the accredited commercial representative of England—could the East India Company hope to make good its footing and that of its country in the distant regions of the Orient. Elizabeth fully realized this when she gave the Company its exclusive charter and invested its representative with powers which were hardly to be distinguished from those of an ambassador. James I, on the other hand, appears to have felt that a ship or two in the East more or less did not matter, and that it was for the conflicting interests to fight out their differences

on the spot rather than for him to exercise a restraining influence by withholding his prerogative when new aspirants appeared in the field. It must have been somewhat in this spirit that he selected the time when the East India Company had just dispatched a second fleet to the East to issue a licence to Sir Edward Michelborne "to discover the countries of China and Japan and to trade with their people." The East India Company protested vigorously against this infringement of the spirit if not the letter of their patent, but all in vain, for they had to contend with adverse Court influences which were proof against any representations, however weighty, on the score of expediency or however well grounded in justice.

Michelborne's venture was the more formidable by reason of the fact that he had secured the co-operation of John Davis. This worthy returned home from Lancaster's expedition to a certain extent under a cloud. He was thought to have misled the Company, and though there was probably a reasonable explanation in Dutch activity of the failure of Acheen to answer the expectations which he held out in regard to it, he suffered the usual fate of the false prophet; he was discarded. In Michelborne's expedition he figured in his old rôle of a pilot, but it may be imagined that he was a good deal more than a simple sailing master. He was as expert in navigation as Michelborne was deficient in that science, and he had, moreover, an incomparable general knowledge, picked up during his extensive service at sea, which must have made his decision authoritative on most questions of discipline and policy. Regarded as an essay in commercial exploitation in a far distant and little known region the gentleman adventurer's expedition was of a decidedly unassuming character.

A single ship of 240 tons named the *Tiger*, and a pinnace, appropriately christened the *Tiger's Whelp*, comprised his "fleet." The whole might have been stowed away on the deck of a modern Atlantic liner without greatly disturbing the deck arrangements. It was formidable enough, however, to cause a good many heart-searchings in certain quarters when the news of its sailing from Cowes on December 5, 1604, reached the City of London, as it probably did a day or two later.

It is unnecessary to follow Michelborne through the various stages of his voyage to the East, which differed little from those which had preceded it.

We may take the story up on August 21, 1605, when the *Tiger* and her consort arrived in the vicinity of Bantam. The appearance at this point of native craft upon the sea seems to have suggested to Michelborne the opportunity for a little indiscriminate piracy. Two prows that were overhauled yielded nothing but a small quantity of rice. On boarding one of them, under the impression that the crew had escaped, two of the sailors from the *Tiger* were grievously wounded by two natives who were lying hidden and who, as soon as the Englishmen set foot in the craft, attacked them with their krises inflicting terrible injuries, thereafter leaping overboard and "swimming away like water spaniels." A day or two later a Bantam ship was overhauled and dismissed, apparently because she had on board nothing worth the taking. Still later a more promising capture was made in the shape of an Indian ship of some eighty tons, laden with a miscellaneous cargo. She was taken into Sillebar, a port in Sumatra, and ransacked with a fine disregard for all laws of right and justice. As no further opening for plunder appeared to offer, Michelborne

made for Bantam, off which port he anchored some time in November.

As news of the exploits of the *Tiger* had preceded her it was natural that her welcome was not effusive. Some Englishmen from the local factory who came aboard told them the stories that were current as to their character. The Hollanders, who were most active in circulating the "slanders" as they were rather whimsically regarded by Michelborne, represented the members of the expedition as a body of "disordinate livers," who only wanted the opportunity to perpetrate the worst acts of violence.

In a fine frenzy of indignation the gentleman adventurer sent a message to the Dutch ships then in port that he would weigh anchor and ride close by them with the intent that they might attack him if they dared. He gave notice that if one piece of ordnance was put out he would either sink them or be sunk by their side. Suiting the action to the word, Michelborne shifted his anchorage to the vicinity of the Dutch fleet, which consisted of five ships, one of which was a large vessel of between 700 and 800 tons. But the challenge was not taken up, and according to the veracious chronicler, "whereas the Hollanders were wont to swagger and keep great stirre on shore all the time before our being there, they were so quiet that we could scarcely see one of them on land."

Notwithstanding this bravado, Michelborne found it convenient to make his stay at the Javan port a brief one. On leaving he steered a course for Patani, a port on the eastern coast of the Malay Peninsula, which at that period was a centre of considerable trade. For some days the vessel was becalmed off the island of Banca. To enliven

the monotony and keep up his character for freebooting, Michelborne chased whatever native craft came within easy distance of him. He got very little for his pains because the native crews of the threatened boats, with their intimate knowledge of the coasts, were able to elude their pursuers. At last the spell of inglorious marauding ended in a terrible tragedy which narrowly missed involving the whole expedition in absolute disaster.

For days the *Tiger* had been lying helplessly upon the water, "a painted ship upon a painted ocean." Hardly a breath of wind stirred to moderate the fierce intensity of the sun which beat with tropical strength upon the decks. The men were lying idly about in the shade of the high bulwarks or hanging listlessly over the sides watching with lack-lustre eyes the adjacent coast of the island of Bintang, which was shimmering in the blue haze of noon-day. Suddenly a cry was raised of a sail. Immediately all was bustle and eager expectancy. The strange craft was too distant to determine her character, but she was evidently more than an ordinary junk.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the mysterious ship came on until she was near enough for those on board the *Tiger* to see that her deck was crowded with men. A boat, heavily armed, was put off from the *Tiger* and after a parley the Englishmen were admitted on board the stranger. She proved to be a Japanese vessel. Her crew, at all events, were of that nation—squat-figured determined-looking fellows, with the impassive calm of their race reflected in their features. There were some eighty or ninety of them, and they were manifestly not all seamen. The garb and bearing of many were indicative of the soldier rather than the sailor. Moreover, they made

no secret that the majority of the party did not usually follow the profession of the sea. What were they then? The truth soon came out when they were questioned. They were very much what Michelborne and his men were, freebooters who picked up what they could on the ocean highway after "the good old rule, the simple plan" which has been followed by the swashbuckler in all ages. They had left Japan some months previously, had pillaged the coast of China and Cambodia and then crossed to Borneo, where they had discarded their ship in favour of another one they had picked up in the usual way. It was this vessel which they were now navigating back to Japan.

The story, told with an entire absence of *mauvaise honté*, was confirmed by the general appearance of the vessel and the absence of all regular discipline on board. Though one man appeared to have a little more authority than the rest the general rule was plainly one of equality. Michelborne became sufficiently interested in the stranger to set a party of his men to ransack her hold. The Japanese outwardly showed no resentment of the indignity offered to them. They fraternized with the English seamen, and a party of them sought and obtained permission to inspect the *Tiger*, which was now immediately alongside. Caution had suggested to Michelborne the desirability of disarming the visitors before they were admitted on board. As this measure was at that time always taken at Eastern ports in the case of the Japanese, owing to their notoriously desperate disposition, there would not have been anything remarkable in its introduction in this instance. But Davis, to whom the proposal was made, deceived by the appearance of total submission which the Japanese presented, would not be convinced that it was

necessary to put any restraint upon their movements either by way of disarmament or by keeping them "before the mast." It seemed to him absurd to place under suspicion these eager visitors who, with childlike curiosity, roamed about the ship inspecting its equipment and examining with especial interest the arrangements for the accommodation of the officers and crew. So the day wore on with men coming and going between the two vessels without restraint as the work of unloading the cargo of the captured junk proceeded. There was even a certain amount of friendly intercourse between the two crews, and on the part of the *Tiger's* officers a display of hospitality. Glasses were lifted and eyes spoke apparently cordial sentiments which could not be expressed by the ordinary medium. The prevailing note of the gathering was one of almost idyllic peacefulness.

In a twinkling the scene was changed. How it came about no one knew, but before the Englishmen realized it they were fighting for dear life a body of desperadoes of the fiercest type. Those on board the Japanese boat were soon overwhelmed. Taken unawares they had no time to use their arms and were either cut down at once or driven overboard.

On the *Tiger*, owing to the unfamiliarity of the Japanese with the ship, the surprise was less decisive, but the position was, nevertheless, critical in the extreme. One of the first victims was poor Davis, who was attacked by the ruffians as he was emerging from the gun room. He was slashed and hacked at with knives and swords and was then thrust out on to the waist of the ship, where in a short time he bled to death. Meanwhile, the *Tiger's* crew, brought to a vivid realization of their peril, had rallied

under Michelborne's leadership and with pikes had advanced to the attack of the Japanese, who were posted in the aft part of the vessel.

A furious conflict ensued. The Englishmen with cool determination fell upon their foes, killing and wounding many with the deadly weapons which they knew so well how to handle. On their part the Japanese fought with the frenzy of fiends. Armed with only short swords or knives they were at a serious disadvantage with their antagonists, but nothing daunted they dodged the thrusts and even caught hold of the pikes with one hand and lunged at their holders with their swords in frantic efforts to kill them. For some minutes this combat went on, each party realizing that it was a fight to the death or nothing. Gradually the superior weight and steadiness of the Englishmen told. Inch by inch the Japanese were driven down the deck, until at length they were near the entrance of the cabin. Then with a shriek of baffled rage they gave way and rushed pell-mell into the interior of the vessel. To follow them would have meant certain death for the first who entered ; it was doubtful whether an attack at close quarters could be made at all with success.

What was to be done ? For some time the Englishmen deliberated without seeing any solution of the problem. At length the happy thought occurred to some one to assail the refuge of the miscreants with ordnance. The idea was promptly acted on. Two demi-culverins (32 pounders) were loaded with bullets, case shot and pieces of iron and fired pointblank at the exposed side of the cabin. There was a crash and splinter of woodwork, followed by a shriek of mingled defiance and agony from the interior and then was comparative silence. The

volley had effectually done its deadly work. When after an interval the cabin was entered it was found that only one of the party of twenty-two survived. The terribly mangled bodies of the remainder showed the extraordinary destructiveness of the improvised ammunition.

All the time that this bloody contest was proceeding on the *Tiger* the Japanese on the junk were, as far as opportunity offered, placed under fire. The punishment they received, though less awe-inspiring in its aspect of concentrated horror, was equally decisive. All suggestions of quarter made from the *Tiger* were scornfully rejected. The desperadoes, with a courage which extorted the admiration of their foes, elected to continue the hopeless fight to the bitter end. One by one they were shot down, until the battered hulk no longer resounded with the fierce cries of defiance of its defenders. Of the entire band one only sought safety in surrender. He swam towards the *Tiger* and prayed to be taken on board, an appeal which naturally did not fall on deaf ears.

When questioned by Michelborne as to the motive for the attack the captive unhesitatingly said that the intention of himself and his comrades was to capture the ship and cut the throats of all on board. After this frank admission he sullenly declined to answer any further questions, and when pressed bade his hearers cut him to pieces as he was ready to die. Michelborne, with, it seems, a lack of chivalry, the next morning ordered the man out for execution. In due course he was strung up at the yardarm, but by a strange mischance the rope broke, and he fell into the sea. No effort was made to recover him, and as land was not far off it was surmised by those on the *Tiger* that he might after all have escaped. It was,

perhaps, a not unsuitable ending to one of the most extraordinary episodes in which an English ship was ever involved in Eastern seas.

A somewhat Cadmean victory was that which Michelborne had won in this encounter. The enemy had been annihilated, but at the cost of a number of the crew and with the loss, in Davis, of the one indispensable man on the ship. After a period of indecision, in which he met the Dutch fleet of five ships, under Admiral Warwyck, which was then on a voyage eastward, he elected to abandon his expedition to China and return immediately home. He eventually reached England towards the close of 1606, a disappointed and discredited man. History has no further concern with his career beyond the evil influences created by his voyage. These were serious in their effect, not merely as they operated on trade, but by the unpleasant impression they gave to the people of the Middle East of the English character. It is doubtful whether for a generation the disagreeable idea that the English were a nation who made free with other people's property at sea was removed. Indeed, more than anything else the piratical raids of Michelborne tended to the discomfiture of the English in their earliest efforts to make their footing good in the spice region.

CHAPTER IV

Life at Sea in the Seventeenth Century

Wide range of the East India Company's operations—Henry Middleton conducts a voyage to Bantam.—Keeling, Sharpeigh and David Middleton command expeditions to the East—Building of the *Trade's Increase*—James I christens it—Life on the Company's ships—The character of crews—Preachers appointed to the ships—The Company's commanders—Discourses by William Keeling and Nicholas Downton

ONE remarkable feature of the earliest operations of the East India Company was their wide geographical scope. Within ten years of the granting of the charter the Company's representatives had ranged the East from one extreme almost to the other, had planted the flag of England in the distant isles of the Eastern seas, had established definite though somewhat unsubstantial relations with the Malayan princes in and about the Straits of Malacca, had visited Aden and penetrated to the then largely unknown and, therefore, doubly perilous waters of the Red Sea, and had formed the first connexion of England with the continent of India by sending a representative to the Court of the Great Mogul. Bearing in mind that all this was accomplished with a capital not larger than that of an ordinary suburban trading venture of to-day and in the face of immense difficulties, not the least of which was the bitter hostility of the Portuguese, we can only wonder at the splendid optimism which guided the councils of the Company in this period, and offer our meed of admiration

to the statesmanlike prescience which thus early marked out the lines which British commercial and political influence in the East was ultimately to follow.

In an estimate of the causes which led the Company to occupy this ample stage at the very outset of its career a prominent place must be given to the character of those whom it entrusted with positions of responsibility. The early commanders were almost without an exception a splendid class, not only excellent seamen and born leaders of men, but individuals in whom a high sense of duty mingled with a strong patriotism. Their first aim, no doubt, was profit, but it was profit with honour, and there were occasions, as we shall see, when considerations of honour outweighed the purely material interests.

Of the best type of commander was Henry Middleton, who took up Lancaster's dropped mantle and piloted to the East the second expedition, which, as already mentioned, left England early in 1604. Middleton had shown his mettle in the earlier voyage, when he had held a responsible but subordinate position. He was one of a family of seamen who have left their mark on the early annals of the East India Company. His selection for the supreme command was no doubt due to the recommendation of Lancaster, whose initial success had elevated him to a position of considerable influence in the Company and, indeed, in the public life of London—a position made more eminent by the knighthood which James had conferred upon him.

Middleton justified the trust reposed in him by bringing the expedition to a brilliantly successful close. With the same ships which had formed Lancaster's fleet he made a good voyage to Bantam, loaded two of his vessels there

with pepper and, having dispatched them home, proceeded with the other two to the Moluccas, where he, in the face of some Dutch opposition, did a brisk trade and established what seemed then likely to prove profitable relations with the native powers. He returned home in May, 1606, with cargoes which brought to the investors a clear return of 95 per cent. on their capital, although one of the four ships had been lost on the voyage back.

In quick succession three other ventures were launched by the Company in the period immediately following Middleton's return. The first of the trio, which figures in history as the third voyage, was commanded by Captain William Keeling, who had as his chief lieutenant David Middleton, a brother of Henry. This voyage is chiefly interesting from the fact that it established the first connexion of the Company with India, one of the three ships of which the fleet was composed—the *Hector*—paying a flying visit to Surat prior to proceeding to Bantam. and leaving there in circumstances to be related in a subsequent chapter William Hawkins with instructions to proceed as envoy to the Court of Jehangir at Agra. Another of its features was the opening of a factory at Banda, an important seat of the spice trade in the Eastern seas, with a consequent further development of the rivalry between English and Dutch in that region. The venture which followed upon this, known as the fourth voyage, with Captain Alexander Sharpeigh as commander, established relations with Aden and Mocha and further extended the Indian connexion. But its course was so marked with misfortune that it did little to promote the cause of English trade expansion in India. First, Sharpeigh, on landing at Aden, was taken prisoner by the Turkish governor and

detained for some time. Not long after he obtained his release his ship was wrecked on the coast of Western India. As a final touch to the disasters of the voyage the other large ship of his fleet, the *Union*, which had embarked a cargo of spice at Acheen and Priaman, was wrecked on the coast of Brittany on the way home. Better fortune attended the last of the three voyages with which we are now dealing—the fifth of the series—which was conducted by David Middleton in 1609–11. Proceeding to the Moluccas and Banda Middleton did a brisk trade, in spite of the open hostility of the Dutch, and the goods, with an additional lading, he obtained at Bantam constituted a very rich cargo which, when landed safely in England in the late summer of 1611, produced a return which went far to compensate for the loss on Sharpeigh's unfortunate voyage.

The year 1609 was in several ways an important one for the Company. Its chief interest lies in the circumstance that it witnessed the abandonment of the system of separate investments for each voyage in favour of a common stock, simultaneously with the renewal of the Company's charter for fifteen years with all its privileges of exclusive trading, subject to a proviso that in the event of the trade not proving profitable to the realm the monopoly might be withdrawn on three years' notice being given. To inaugurate the new era the Company had built the largest ship which up to that time had ever left the stocks in England. With its 1,100 tons burden, it was in the eyes of the people of that age a veritable leviathan, and for very many years after it represented the maximum size of trading ships. In fact right down to the era of steam the East Indiamen rarely exceeded that tonnage. The stan-

dard size of the ships of the Company's fleet was 500 tons, and it was vessels of this class which throughout the long period of the Company's history as a trading organization conducted the bulk of its extensive operations.

James, who by this time had obtained a clearer knowledge of the value of the Indian trade and of the desirability of encouraging it in the only practicable way by giving the Company a free hand, deigned to identify himself specially with the new phase of commercial activity which the construction of this big ship was destined to introduce. Accompanied by the Queen and Prince Henry he, on December 30, 1609, went to the docks where the vessel was lying and formally christened it the *Trade's Increase*, and at the same time bestowed upon the pinnace which was to be its consort the whimsical though not inappropriate name of the *Peppercorn.* A third ship, the *Darling*, to which Nicholas Downton was posted as commander, completed the composition of the new fleet.

It may be of interest at this point, before we follow Middleton's ship on what was to prove an eventful voyage, to say something about the manner of life of those who were employed in the Company's service in these early years. The crews, like the commanders, appear to have been selected with care. They must have been on the whole well educated men, according to the standard of the time, and a few of them were probably of superior ability. An individual was recommended for service in one of the earliest fleets because he could speak fluently Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. His qualifications were not altogether exceptional if we may judge from the frequent references to the linguistic attainments of individuals in the records. And that the general average of knowledge

and intelligence was high is attested by the responsibilities from time to time imposed upon the men before the mast. For example, in Jourdain's Journal mention is made of a jury of seamen having been empanelled to try three of their fellows who had been guilty of murder. That the trust shown in their impartiality, even where the life of shipmates was involved, was not misplaced, is shown by the fact that they returned a verdict of guilty and that two of the murderers were hanged as a result of their finding.

A devotion to music was a marked characteristic of these seamen of the early seventeenth century. Some of the men were performers of no mean order. One of the number, a cornet player, attained to some distinction in India in consequence of his playing. Favoured by circumstances he enjoyed a brief hour of glorious life at the court of a native potentate until the inevitable time arrived when his royal patron tired of his performances and passed on his favours to some indigenous entertainer whose playing he was better able to appreciate.

The Company encouraged the musical inclinations of its servants by supplying the ships with suitable instruments. We read in reference to one of the vessels of this time that "a virginal was brought for two to play upon at once," the instrument being so contrived that by the pulling out of a pin "a man could make both go," "which," adds the writer, "is a delightful sight (device) for the jacks to skip up and down in such manner as they will."

Literature was not neglected. As an appropriate food for the mind the directors sent out in the opening years of the Company Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, Hakluyt's *Voyages*, and a then recently published work "of that worthy son of Christ, Mr. Wm. Perkins," one of the ablest ex-

ponents of Calvinism, then so much in vogue. Each ship was also equipped with a full supply of Bibles and Books of the Psalms for the services which were held daily when time and circumstance permitted.

The moral welfare of the crews was specially entrusted to "preachers," who accompanied all the larger ships. Evidence of the pains taken to select these early predecessors of the Indian chaplains is to be found in the Company's minutes. Apparently candidates for the office had to preach trial sermons before the directors. Nor when they had emerged from this ordeal successfully were they sure of selection, for a careful scrutiny of their antecedents was made, and if any adverse facts came to light a ban was put upon the applicant. One, a certain William Evans, who had "practised physic for twenty years in France and England and studied divinity for eight years," was rejected because it was found that "as ill a report goeth as any about this town of his coat (cloth)," while another failed to pass muster as it was discovered that "he hath a straggling humour, can frame himself to all company as he finds men affected and delighteth in tobacco and wine."

The Company's commanders re-inforced the teachings of the regular ministers of religion. A discourse of Keeling to the factors he took out with him, which figures in the records, dwells upon the care which the Company took to furnish them with things needful for their spiritual comfort and the health of their bodies, and admonishes them to be more "respective," and "to shun all sin and evil behaviour that the heathen may take no advantage to blaspheme our religion by the abuses and ungodly behaviour of our men." In a similar strain Nicholas Downton enjoined the representatives he left behind at

Surat, "to have a careful eye over the manners and behaviours of both young and old," and directed that "if any be found by excessive drinking or otherwise like to prove a scandal to our nation . . . to use first sharp reprehensions, and if that do not prevail then inflict punishment, and if that work not reformation then by the first ship send him home with a writing showing the reasons thereof." That these instructions were necessary is abundantly proved by the frequent references to individual excesses. Numerous instances are given of men dying with "the flux" in consequence of "inordinate drinking of a wine called tastie (toddy) distilled from the palmetto tree."

Stern discipline was maintained on the ships to enforce the rule of decent living. The lash was unsparingly used, and in a letter included with the records of Middleton's voyage with which we shall shortly deal there is a statement which shows that a man suspected of theft was put to the torture to extract a confession of his guilt. Undue stress, however, must not be laid upon the irregularities which are revealed in the narratives of the early voyages. Something surely must be allowed for the ordinary frailties of humanity in men placed as these pioneers were in situations of extreme hardship and peril in strange lands to which the depressing influences of a tropical climate added an element of peculiar malignity. It must not be forgotten that with all their faults these simple seamen never hesitated to lay down their lives at the call of duty and that to their strenuous endeavour we probably owe the full measure of sovereignty we enjoy in India to-day, for if less courage and less energy had been displayed the Company's operations might easily have been diverted to more barren fields and the conquest of India left to other hands.

CHAPTER V

How the English went to India

William Hawkins is landed at Surat—Makarrab Khan, the local Governor—A typical Mogul official—His attitude towards the English—Hawkins proceeds to Agra—Description of the city of that day—Jehangir on the throne of the Great Mogul—He gives Hawkins a friendly reception—Takes him into his service—Hawkins's advance to power—His marriage—Effect of Jehangir's patronage of Hawkins on the officials at Surat—Jehangir's character—His debauchery and cruelty—Downfall of Hawkins.

IT must have been with somewhat of a thrill that on an August day in 1608 those on board the East India Company's good ship *Hector* saw above the Eastern horizon the low-lying coastline of Guzerat with its fringing of palm groves and its pleasant background of cultivated land clad in the rich verdure of the season of monsoon rains, now approaching its close. For the first time from the deck of an English ship Englishmen gazed on this fair and spreading scene in which the fabled wealth of India seemed to be so happily typified. None of course could appreciate to the full the deep historic significance underlying this earliest connexion established between the shores of England and India. But there was on board at all events one who of a certainty realized that the occasion was no common one of a trading ship entering an unfamiliar port. This individual was William Hawkins, bearer of a letter from James I to the Great Mogul asking

on behalf of the Company for liberty to trade in India.

Hawkins, though probably not to be identified with the man of the same name whom we have already met with as Fenton's associate in his unfortunate voyage, was a true adventurer of the type which had been fashioned out of the events of the Elizabethan period. He was no stranger to the East. During some years spent in the Levant he had mastered the native languages current in the places in which he traded, and with them had acquired a knowledge of Oriental manners and customs, and, what was, perhaps, more important, had gained an insight into Eastern character such as few Englishmen of his day could lay claim to. His outlook was, perhaps not unnaturally, coloured by a strong personal ambition.

Those were times in which men of European race rose to great positions at the Oriental courts. All over Asia the subtle influence of the West was carrying with it a force which was more and more revealing itself in the capricious tastes of the despotic rulers who held sway in those regions. To every stranger from Europe there was a chance of distinction. To vary a familiar simile the traveller carried in his knapsack a minister's wand of office. Hawkins was perfectly aware of this, and from the first obviously endeavoured to turn his position of envoy to the fullest account. He made his *début* at Surat not as a simple seaman or a humble trader intent on getting on to the market under favourable conditions a cargo of goods, but as an ambassador of a great power, which has a right to demand and exact respectful treatment.

At the very earliest period of the *Hector's* stay off Surat Hawkins found that his mission was to be one of no ordinary difficulty. He came into collision at once almost with

Portuguese pretensions to exercise undisputed sway in Indian waters. All attempts to communicate with the shore were frustrated, and when in defiance of the edict imposed by the commander of the Portuguese warships on the coast boats attempted a landing the crews were attacked and made prisoners. Hawkins forwarded a vigorous protest against the outrage demanding the release of the men and goods seized and pointing out that the warlike attitude adopted was unjustifiable in view of the fact that England and Portugal were now at peace. The remonstrance was treated with contempt by the Portuguese commander. The "proud rascall" not only insolently declined to set the crews at liberty, but in the presence of Hawkins' messenger "most vilely abused his Majesty, terming him King of fishermen and of an island of no importance." It was, he finally indicated, beneath his dignity to send any written reply to the indignant representations of the English commander. Eventually the captured men were sent as prisoners to Goa, to be dealt with by the authorities there.

Hawkins, by dint of perseverance, managed to establish a precarious communication with the shore, but he quickly discovered that this extension of his activities merely increased his difficulties. Surat at the time was under the rule of a local governor named Makarrab Khan, who enjoyed a semi-independent authority under the Viceroy of the Ahmedabad province.

Makarrab Khan was a typical Mogul official, proud, arrogant and avaricious. He had been elevated to power by one of those curious freaks of fortune that from the time of Joseph onwards have brought individuals from obscurity to positions of power in Oriental countries.

Originally a Court physician, he had successfully treated the Emperor for some disease from which he was suffering. Out of gratitude for the relief afforded Jehangir had nominated the fortunate practitioner to the lucrative oversight of government business at Surat under the title of Makarrab Khan, which, roughly translated, means Lord of my Health. The newly appointed governor, after the manner of his time, used his position for his personal aggrandizement. A scarcely veiled form of blackmail was imposed upon all who came within the area of his government for purposes of trade. His exactions were only circumscribed by the limitations imposed by the poverty of his victims or their capacity for resisting his rapacious demands.

To such a man as Makarrab Khan the visit of the English ship was a welcome addition to the customary sources of plunder, which had become restricted by the operation of his oppressive system. He prepared without unnecessary delay to turn the opportunity to account. Goods which the Englishmen contrived to smuggle ashore in spite of the Portuguese were overhauled by the governor, and all articles that took his fancy were appropriated on the illusory understanding that they would be paid for in some remote and ill-defined future. The process was repeated until a period was reached when, as Hawkins put it, his temporary place of residence was "swept clean" of all articles of value. As soon as this had been done, and it had been made clear that there would be no further supplies to annex, the governor, "little by little" (says Hawkins), "degraded me of his good looks." Meantime, the *Hector* had resumed her voyage to Bantam in view of the uselessness of prolonging her stay at the Western

India port. Her departure had led the Portuguese to redouble their exertions to secure the expulsion of their hated rivals. Makarrab Khan might have listened to their hostile suggestions if he had not found it more profitable to pluck the pigeon rather than drive it away. What would have happened if Hawkins had not cut the Gordian knot by deciding to leave for the Great Mogul's Court at Agra it is difficult to say. But Makarrab Khan was under a certain fear of the Portuguese, and if the furtherance of their designs had not stood in the way of his interests it is probable that he would have lent his sanction to their schemes.

As befitted his exalted and largely self-imposed rank Hawkins set out on his long journey into the interior with a large retinue. In his cavalcade, besides a number of personal attendants, were fifty horsemen—Pathans—"a people very much feared in these parts," as no doubt they were with cause, for they are amongst the fiercest of the wild races of the Indian frontier.

A strong guard was a necessity of the journey in the then state of India. Hawkins' route in part lay through a wild country which was the home of intractable tribes who subsist largely on plunder. Moreover, a veiled state of war existed in some districts in which the sovereignty of the Mogul power was not fully accepted. But Hawkins appears to have been concerned not so much about these ordinary perils of the road as with the enmity of the Portuguese. Rightly or wrongly he supposed that emissaries of the Goa government were awaiting the opportunity of his journey to assassinate him. An actual plot was laid to overwhelm his party with a force of three hundred native horsemen under a chief who had been employed for

the purpose, but the Englishman "went so strong and well provided" that the hired assailants called off their bargain. Subsequently Hawkins discovered another conspiracy in which Makarrab Khan was concerned. In this instance his own coachman was employed either to kill him while he slept or put poison in his food, and probably would have accomplished his purpose had not the man, when intoxicated, spoken too openly of his intentions. Despite the dangers which beset him Hawkins arrived in good health at Agra on April 16, 1609, two and a half months after his departure from Surat.

Agra at this juncture was the capital of the Mogul Empire. It was not until a later period, during the reign of Shah Jehan, that Delhi was made the regular seat of government. Even Agra, at the time of Hawkins' visit, was devoid of some of the features which have made it famous. The matchless Taj Mahal had still to be built on the banks of the swift flowing Jumna. The beautiful tomb of Itmud Dowlah, Shah Jehan's famous minister, was also a thing of the future. The extensive fort, with its high red sandstone walls, to become prominent in after years as the scene of some of the most stirring episodes of the great Sepoy Mutiny, was, however, in existence, and within its walls the exquisite Pearl Mosque, that gem of Saracenic art, opened its portals to the faithful, while in the adjacent apartments of the Palace the ladies of Jehangir's harem lived their uneventful lives behind the white marble walls whose intricate tracery excites to-day the wonder and admiration of the personally conducted tourist from Europe.

The city itself was a far larger and more imposing place than the rather squalid and sleepy mofussil town which

it is at present. Its extensive bazaars teemed with the life and movement of a great Oriental capital. From the four quarters of the compass passed in and out in unending succession caravans bringing merchandise from all parts of India and even from the remote confines of Asia. The most magnificent court that the gorgeous East has known brought to the scene an indescribable wealth of glittering pageantry. Long trains of richly caparisoned elephants, escorted by troops of mounted men equipped with bucklers and spears and wearing the splendid uniform of the imperial guard, went in stately procession through the streets, while from the lofty altitude of the gold and silver howdahs upon the backs of the great animals looked down with supercilious indifference the princes of the Imperial House decked out with precious stones and "the barbaric pearl and gold" which an exuberant Oriental fancy decreed as the fitting adornments of royal personages.

On the judgment seat of the celebrated Akbar in the Fort sat his degenerate son Jehangir, "the Conqueror of the World." A man in the prime of life, he had reigned only five years at the period with which we are dealing. As the narrative will show he was a strange compound of qualities mostly bad. An Oriental despot of the most pronounced type, his life was stained with a thousand crimes. He became so hardened to cruelty that out of mere wantonness he would perpetrate the most horrible barbarities; yet he could be generous when the fit seized him, and even at times showed a certain magnanimity in his dealings with those about him. A strong sense of humour occasionally characterized his actions, while his demeanour towards those whom he liked assumed ofttimes a bluff heartiness curiously contrasted with the

almost fiendish malignity he could display to those who had had the misfortune to give him offence even unwittingly. He was essentially a man of moods. In the evening he might be a genial and even interesting companion, delighting in badinage and conversational small talk. The morning would probably reveal him as the personification of gloom, his brow clouded with a black frown, his eye fierce and menacing and his voice like thunder. Woe to the man then on whom that terrible eye might light. These strange transitions from one state of mind to exactly the opposite are susceptible of a simple explanation. Jehangir was an inveterate drinker. A carousal was a feature of the day's routine, and probably during the greater part of his reign he never went to bed sober. Alcoholic excess produced its natural and inevitable result in destroying the balance of the mind and rendering the Emperor capricious, irritable and cruel. It is doubtful whether in some of his fits of passion he was really sane. Such was the man who gave the concession which was the foundation of English trade in India, and of the influence which led directly to the building up of the mighty fabric of the British Indian Empire.

When the English merchant envoy with his escort of wild horsemen rode on that hot April day in 1609 along the dusty road leading into Agra from the West they must have excited more than ordinary attention; for Hawkins was not the man to hide his light under a bushel and in any event a European mission was a sufficient novelty to make a considerable stir in the imperial city. Jehangir, who had probably been kept informed of the progress of the mission after its departure from Surat, appears to have had the very earliest intimation of its

arrival in his capital. Before Hawkins could even select a place of residence the imperial messengers were scouring the capital with orders to bring him to the palace for an immediate audience. When, owing to the rapidity of the Englishman's movements, they failed to discover his whereabouts, detachments of horse and foot were sent into every quarter of the city with imperative instructions to find the stranger. By this means Hawkins was ultimately run to earth. He was perplexed rather than flattered by the eagerness of the Emperor to see him. He wanted to make his appearance at the Mogul Court with fitting dignity, and the imperial marshal was so exigent that he would scarcely allow him time to don his best attire. He was mollified, however, by the elaborate preparations for his reception which, as he proudly comments in his diary, were all that a king's ambassador was entitled to expect.

With some trepidation Hawkins appeared in the imperial presence. He had got to know that presents were an indispensable adjunct of an ambassador's outfit and that the cloth, which was all that he had to offer, was not at all likely to be to Jehangir's taste. All passed off well, however. The Emperor smiled benignantly on him as he made his obeisance, and when he had listened to the translated version of James' letter read by a Portuguese priest at his Court, he graciously intimated that he would with all his heart grant everything that his Majesty requested. Some chance remarks made by Hawkins led to the discovery that Jehangir and he had a common medium of conversation in Arabic, which the latter had acquired in his earlier career. A lively interchange of sentiments took place, with the result that the Emperor became so

interested in his visitor that on dismissing him at the close of the audience he commanded that he should be in daily attendance at his Court.

Hawkins' position was now assured. He advanced from honour to honour with a rapidity only possible in an Oriental court. At length some weeks after the arrival of the mission Jehangir made him a definite proposal with a view of securing his services permanently. The imperial offer was a licence for a factory at Surat for the Company, and for Hawkins personally an allowance of £3,200 a year, with the command of 400 horse. The suggestion was too tempting to be put aside by one in the position of Hawkins. As he quaintly put it to the Company, while another would easily take the place tentatively assigned to him at Bantam he would be so situated that "I should feather my nest and doe you service." He therefore closed with the proposal, and from the rôle of envoy made an easy transition to that of personal attendant on the Emperor. In his new office he was intimately associated with Jehangir not only in the ceremonial duties of the daily durbar, where he occupied a position among the nobles in the little railed enclosure reserved for them, but in the nightly wassails in the inner recesses of the palace, at which the imperial debauchee unbent in extraordinary fashion.

It was probably at one of these symposiums that Jehangir took it into his head to confer upon Hawkins a wife. The story, as told by the erstwhile envoy in his record of his life at Agra, is that the Emperor one day was "very earnest" with him "to take a white maiden out of his palace," promising that "he would give her all things necessary with slaves," and offering as an additional

inducement that she should turn Christian. Hawkins declined to accept the proposal as far as it concerned his marriage to a "Moor," but he allowed his imperial patron to understand that if a Christian could be found he would be willing to espouse her. He represents that he made this concession because he wanted to be free and he imagined that the condition was an impossible one. But he had literally reckoned without his host. Jehangir discovered for him an Armenian girl, the daughter of a captain who was in great favour with Akbar and who had some time previously died, leaving his offspring in rather poor circumstances. As the Emperor had set his heart on the marriage Hawkins had no alternative but to yield a reluctant consent. As no Christian minister was available to sanctify the union Hawkins got his personal servant Nicholas to act the part of priest, a procedure which, he says naively, "I thought had been lawful till I met with a preacher that came out with Sir Henry Middleton and he, showing me the error I was in, marryed (me) again." Mrs. Hawkins, as we shall discover, was a very enterprising lady who quite justified Jehangir's selection of her as a suitable mate for his English favourite.

Not long after the curious episode just related Jehangir gave Hawkins his commission "under his great seal with golden letters." This he promptly sent on to Surat, where he had left two of the Company's representatives, William Finch and Thomas Aldworth, to keep the place warm pending brighter days for trade. Before the document reached its destination news of the remarkable favour shown to Hawkins at Court had reached the Western port and had led to the circulation of a curious rumour as to the means by which he had captured the vagrant imperial

fancy. The version of the bazaar gossip given by Finch in a letter written to Hawkins, whom, with a proper deference for his new dignity, he addressed as "my Lord," was that he had presented to the Emperor "a small coffer with eleven locks within which were such rare stones that they would (so) lighten the darkest place that it would need no candle." Finch expressed himself as sceptical about the truth of the story, but as to the effect of the distinction conferred upon Hawkins he was very emphatic. The news, he stated, had been received "to the great applause of the vulgar sort, but with small content to the great ones, who bite their lips exceedingly to hear the great honours done to your Worship, yet are silent, not daring much." The Surat officials, though reduced to silence, were not the less dangerous on that account. From the moment of Hawkins' elevation to power they sought, by the means which long experience had taught them to practise with effect, to undermine his position.

Meanwhile, the subject of the intrigues, in happy ignorance of the machinations of his old enemy, Makarrab Khan, was tasting the full joys of life at the wonderful Mogul Court. His descriptions of the various ceremonies at the palace and of the personal doings of the Emperor are marked by a shrewd insight into character and have many graphic touches which help us to realize to-day what the India of the period of the Mogul ascendency was like.

Every day at three o'clock Jehangir sat in durbar in high state. All his nobles who happened to be in Agra at the time were expected to attend these functions, and there were present besides a great number of high officials, "every man standing in his degree, the chiefest being

within a red rail placed three steps above the level of the ordinary assemblage. In the midst of the audience chamber, immediately in front of the Emperor, was "one of his sheriffs, together with his Master Hangman, who is accompanied with forty hangmen, wearing on their heads a certain quilted cap, with an hatchet on their shoulders, and others with all sorts of whips, being there ready to do what the King commandeth." At this assemblage the Emperor was accustomed to administer justice after the manner of his father, but without the great Akbar's acumen or his magnanimity and tolerance.

When the official work was done he retired to his "private place of prayer." His devotions ended, he had his principal meal, which consisted of four or five sorts of roasted meat washed down with a draught of "strong drink." Thereafter he repaired to his private room, "where none can come but such as himself nominateth." Hawkins, however, was regularly commanded to the imperial drinking den, and he gives a singular account of the routine observed at the nightly function.

The quantity of the Emperor's drink was regulated by his physicians, but the allowance was always ample, and to add to its effect Jehangir was accustomed to follow up the drinking of the last cup by consuming a quantity of opium. After this, "being in the height of his drink, he layeth him down to sleep, every man departing to his own home." Later in the evening when the Emperor had slept off the first effects of the alcohol and the drug his supper was brought in, and the final picture we have of the mighty monarch is of his being fed like a child prior to retiring for what remained of the night.

A singular idiosyncrasy which distinguished Jehangir

was a desire that the pearls of wisdom which fell from his lips, whether when he was drunk or sober, should be recorded for the edification of posterity. To this end he had at his elbow a sort of Court reporter, who was charged with the special duty of noting his comments on any matter, either with reference to State affairs or to the most intimate concerns of his private existence. It is probable that this precious record which was to go down to remote ages did not outlive the reign. But we know quite enough of Jehangir's habits from the writings of unauthorized Boswells to be able to dispense with the Court newsman's transcripts.

Jehangir's personal characteristics are further illustrated in interesting fashion by several anecdotes which Hawkins relates from experiences within his own knowledge.

One day a young Pathan from the frontier applied for employment to one of the Emperor's sons. He was asked what pay he expected. The man's reply was that he would not serve either the prince or his father under Rs. 1,000 a day. The prince smilingly asked what was in him that he demanded such extravagant remuneration.

"Make trial with me," responded the Pathan, "with all sorts of weapons, either on horseback or on foot, and if I do not perform as much as I speak let me die for it."

Amused at the man's conceit the prince later in the day related the incident to his father. Jehangir, who was "merry" at the time, commanded the Pathan to be brought before him. It happened to be an occasion on which the Emperor was diverting himself with a lion fight, and the lions were about to be brought into the arena as

the suitor for employment responded to the summons to appear in the imperial presence.

Jehangir's eye, roving about in drunken fashion, caught sight of the fierce animals, which were approaching in the custody of their keepers. Turning to the Pathan he demanded why he asked such high wages.

The answer given to the prince was repeated, "Make trial of me."

"That I will," responded Jehangir; "go wrestle and buffet with the lion."

The Pathan not unnaturally demurred to accept such an unequal combat. The Emperor, however, would hear of no refusal, so the young tribesman, with probably a heavy heart but with undaunted mien, stepped into the arena, while at the same moment the chained lion was released by its keepers. The poor fellow strove to master the animal, with the inevitable result that in a few minutes, all mangled and bleeding, he was lying in the last agonies on the ground of the arena. Not content with the sacrifice of this brave fellow the bloodthirsty tyrant ordered other men into the arena to battle with the lions for his enjoyment. Terrible injuries were inflicted upon a number of unfortunates before the passion for man-killing was sated.

Quite as characteristic as this story of blood lust is the incident of a different type which Hawkins relates concerning one of the Emperor's leading ministers. This functionary through an act of carelessness one day broke a china dish which Jehangir valued very much. Instead of reporting the occurrence the official sent to China for a new dish to replace the one broken, trusting that the loss would not be discovered in the meantime. But in an unfortunate moment for him his imperial master bethought

himself of his treasure, and when in answer to his inquiries he learnt that it had been broken his rage knew no bounds. Commanding the offending noble to be brought into his presence he caused him to be cruelly beaten by two men armed with great whips. After the poor wretch had received 120 lashes from these fearful implements of torture he was handed over to porters to be beaten with small cudgels. Then, more dead than alive, he was dragged out of the durbar by the heels and thrown into prison.

The following day the Emperor asked whether the offender was, still alive, and finding that he was condemned him to a life of perpetual imprisonment. One of the royal princes, who was friendly with the minister, at this point interceded on the man's behalf and obtained his father's reluctant permission to take charge of him.

At the end of two months, having to some extent recovered from the effects of his punishment, the degraded minister appeared before the Emperor to appeal for pardon. But the memory of his fault still rankled in the imperial mind, and he would only consent to admit the culprit to his former position on the condition that he first produced a dish exactly like the one which had been destroyed. This was tantamount to a sentence of banishment for a long period, as the only likely place in which to discover a duplicate was China.

Quitting the Court the fallen minister started at once on his long journey across Asia. When he had been absent fourteen months on his strange mission news was received at Agra that the Shah of Persia, hearing of Jehangir's loss and having the exact partner of the broken dish, had forwarded it as a present to his imperial brother, to the intense gratification of the exile, who was on his way home.

The favour of a tyrant so capricious as Jehangir showed himself to be was a slender reed on which an isolated Englishman could lean at that juncture, and the day came when Hawkins discovered that the intrigues of Makarrab Khan and of his close associates, the Portuguese, were having effect on the imperial mind to his disadvantage. He strove manfully to resist the insidious influences and, for a time, seemed to have conquered, but at length "the King went again from his word, esteeming a few toys which the fathers had promised him more than his honour." Hawkins made yet another effort to obtain the licence to trade for the Company, which was the bone of contention, but Jehangir informed him that he had finally decided to withhold it.

"Thus," says Hawkins, "was I tossed and tumbled in the kind of a rich merchant adventuring all he had in one bottom, and by casualtie of stormes or pirates lost it all at once."

The rebuff here administered was the beginning of the end. Presently, Hawkins was told that he was not to enter within the red rails where he had stood near the Emperor during the two years of his service. The intimation was a hint not to be disregarded with impunity. He commenced to make preparations for departure. His first thought was to obtain a safe conduct to Goa for himself and his wife, but he was spared the humiliation of making an application in this quarter by the news which reached Agra at the juncture of the arrival of three English ships under Sir Henry Middleton at Surat. Without loss of time he made his way to the coast and was soon once more, to his great joy, on the deck of an English ship.

Hawkins' subsequent career belongs to a somewhat

later period than that with which we must now deal, but for the sake of completeness the remaining facts may be told here. He proceeded with Sir Henry Middleton's fleet to Bantam and there embarked for home in the *Peppercorn*, commanded by Nicholas Downton. The voyage proved a very unhealthy one, and more than half the company on board died, the victims including Hawkins. His wife went on to London in the *Peppercorn*, and not long afterwards contracted a marriage with Gabriel Towerson, a prominent commander in the Company's service, who subsequently became famous as the central victim in the massacre of Amboina. We shall meet him again, but Mrs. Hawkins, or Towerson as she must now be called, fades from the scene shortly after this. She distinguished herself in London by some transactions relative to a very valuable diamond which she had brought with her, probably as part of her first husband's spoils of office. The last glimpse of her is later on at Surat, where on her return to India, she, with one or two other ladies, gave the local representatives of the English Company an infinite amount of trouble by her demands on their resources. She must have been a woman of above the ordinary degree of ability and seems to have had over Hawkins a remarkable influence. Hawkins himself was an exceptionally clever man—tactful, resourceful and endowed to a marked degree with that masterfulness which, when combined with the afore-mentioned qualities, is so sure a passport to success with Orientals. His cannot, perhaps, be regarded as a great name in the list of seventeenth century adventurers in the East, but it is emphatically an interesting one.

CHAPTER VI

English Captives in Arabia

Sharpeigh conducts an expedition to Aden—Jourdain's account of the voyage—Description of Aden—Rejib Aga, the Turkish governor, detains Sharpeigh—Jourdain and Glasscock proceed overland to Mocha—Unsuccessful effort to trade—Departure of the expedition—Sir Henry Middleton arrives at Aden with a fleet—Proceeds to Mocha in the *Trade's Increase*—Attacked and made prisoner

THE scene now changes from the fertile fields of Guzerat and the picturesque environment of the Mogul Court to the arid wastes of Aden and the Yemen. By some strange aberration, the directors of the East India Company at this early period gave directions to two of their fleets in succession to establish trade relations with Aden and with the Turkish fort of Mocha in the Red Sea. They seem to have anticipated a profitable opening at these centres for commerce, and to have been keenly desirous of forming a permanent connexion with either or both places. But there could hardly have been a more serious miscalculation. Aden had played a great part in ancient times as an incomparable strategical position, and it was centuries later again to figure prominently on the stage of the world's history. At the time of which we are writing, however, it was a mere outpost of the feeble Ottoman power. It had been captured from the Portuguese a few years previously and had been maintained largely on the dues from the pil-

grim traffic passing from India to the Red Sea. The decadent Mohammedan administration was accentuated by natural disadvantages of an exceptional character.

Nature seems to have taken revenge for conferring upon Aden a dominating position by endowing her with perhaps the driest climate and the least productive soil of any habitable spot on the globe. The place is little better than a vast volcanic cinder heap, picturesque in a sombre fashion, but bearing on its gaunt, grim face an aspect of desolation which prohibits the idea of an extensive local commerce. The Arabian littoral of the Red Sea is a fitting complement of this "Gibraltar of the East." The region is "mostly light land," to use a phrase applied by the late Lord Salisbury, when in a sardonic mood, to a disputed region bordering on the Sahara. Its chief importance is derived from association with the Holy Places of Mohammedanism and to the stream of pilgrims which is continually entering and leaving its ports. In the period with which we are dealing, a certain amount of trade was carried on between Abyssinia and the Arabian ports, and there was in addition a flow of traffic up and down the Red Sea from Egypt. But the commerce of the region was of too insignificant a character to repay the enterprise of a Western mercantile organization in the most favoured circumstances. The bigotry and fanaticism of the population added, and still add, weight to the limitations which Nature has imposed upon the country. At the present time, three centuries after the visit of the first English ship to the Red Sea, the difficulty of establishing direct trading relations by Europeans at the Arabian ports is still considerable.

It was to this unpromising corner of the East that in the spring of 1608 the Company dispatched the ships of its

fourth voyage, which, as we have seen, consisted of the *Ascension* and the *Union*, commanded by Captain Alexander Sharpeigh. A vivid account of the expedition is given by John Jourdain, who accompanied the ships as one of the factors, and whose journal, published by the Hakluyt Society, under the erudite editorial supervision of Mr. Wm. Foster, is not the least valuable of the many interesting historical documents of this eventful period. Jourdain, who came of good Dorsetshire stock—his father was in 1584 Mayor of Lyme Regis—drifted into the Company's service from the Western shipping trade, which was a veritable nursery of the early East India commanders. His education must have been above the common, for his diary is a work of some elaboration, containing not only an account of the professional aspects of the voyage, but much in the nature of topographical description and narrative of personal experiences. He appears through his writings in the light of a strong, self-reliant character, not afraid of responsibility, and, like most of his fellows, keen for the honour of his country. On this voyage he figured in a subordinate part, which did not allow him any great scope for distinguishing himself, but later, as will be found as the story progresses, he earned a niche in the Hall of Fame which is tenanted by the sailor worthies of the early seventeenth century.

Many months were consumed in the voyage to the Cape and the subsequent effort to beat up the African coast to Aden. After some exciting experiences at Pemba, near Zanzibar, and subsequently in a conflict with the crews of several native vessels overhauled at sea, the *Ascension* and the *Union*, towards the middle of January, 1609, found themselves in the vicinity of the Seychelles. As his

men were greatly in need of rest and fresh food, Sharpeigh decided to make a brief stay at the islands. It was a happy decision in every way, as events proved, for though the group at that time appears to have been uninhabited, there were obtainable ample supplies of nourishing food and fruit—amongst the latter the famous *coco-de-mer*, or double coco-nut, which is found nowhere else in the tropics. It is this fruit which in after years Gordon rendered famous by propagation of his singular theory that it was the Forbidden Fruit and that it grew in the veritable Garden of Eden. Gordon probably was not acquainted with Jourdain's diary; if he had been he would have found some confirmation of his view in the terms in which this estimable sailor referred to the sojourn at the Seychelles. "These islands," Jourdain wrote enthusiastically, "seemed to us an earthly paradise." He spoke no more than the sentiments of a mariner who after suffering the buffetings and hardships of the ocean finds peace and content in a safe haven; but the hero of Khartoum would probably have read into the passage a deeper significance.

When the *Ascension* and the *Union* left the Seychelles they proceeded to Socotra, a savage, inhospitable land, whose Eastern outlines are fairly familiar to voyagers who proceed *viâ* the Red Sea to the Far East and to Australia. As up to that period no English ship had ever visited the country, the visitors created a considerable sensation. The captain of an Indian craft in harbour at the time found the presence of the English ships so disconcerting that he surreptitiously left the anchorage and put to sea. Sharpeigh, however, wanted a pilot so badly that he could not afford to allow this opportunity of securing expert assistance to pass. By his orders, therefore, the boat was over-

hauled before it had got very far with the result that the native nacodah, or master, resigned himself to the inevitable and agreed, for a consideration, to take the English fleet into Aden.

Under the skilled guidance of the Indian pilot the journey was continued, and on the evening of April 7, 1609, the *Ascension* and the *Union* dropped anchor under the shadow of the frowning natural ramparts of Aden. If we may judge by Jourdain's diary, they were immensely impressed by the aspect of this "stronge place." We have in the narrator's graphic words a detailed description of the fortress, which might be adopted with very little change as a picture of it as it is to-day. The town, he noted, "is situated in a valley environed about with great mountains, except on the north side, where there are three gates. And on the mountains there are castles and watchhouses round about, with ordnance in them and a watch in all of them, though with few men, for they are situated in such a strong place that one may keep out twenty." "In this ruinated city," continues Jourdain, "there is no fresh water but some wells, which are as brackish as the sea, where the common people drink; and being so used unto it doeth them no hurt. It is an inconsiderable city, for within the walls there is not any green: only your delight must be in the cragged rocks and decayed houses. It does seldom or never rain in this city, which is the reason that there is nothing that groweth within it. It was reported unto us that in seven years they had seen no rain within the city."

The far from cheerful first impressions of the visitors were not removed by closer acquaintance with the town and its inhabitants. Here, as at Surat, there was a presiding genius who looked upon the strangers in the light of

legitimate prey; but Makarrab Khan was almost a gentleman compared with he who sat at the receipt of custom at Aden. Rejib Aga, to give him his official name, was one of a low class of European renegades who were not uncommonly met with at this period in Asia in positions of authority to which they had wormed their way by devious methods. Jourdain's account of him is that he was of Greek nationality and "was originally a servile slave of the pasha of Sania," whose favour he had won because he had shown himself "a beneficiall knave."

Towards the Englishmen Rejib Aga at the outset adopted an attitude of ostentatious friendliness. He welcomed Sharpeigh "with tabour and pipe and other heathen music," invested him with a robe of honour, and conducted him personally to "a fine house" which he had had specially prepared for his accommodation. His effusiveness was part of a deep-laid plot to get both ships and their cargo into his power. His real intentions were revealed when Sharpeigh, after he had had his fill of honours, essayed to return to his ship. It was then made clear that the English commander and the men with him were practically prisoners until Rejib Aga had had time to communicate with the pasha at Sana, near Mocha. After ineffectual protests Sharpeigh resigned himself to his fate, but the astute Greek, though he had the English commander in his power, gained nothing by his treachery.

Sharpeigh's colleagues on the ships, alarmed at the turn of events, resolutely declined either to leave their safe anchorage in the harbour for a position nearer the shore, where they would be commanded by the guns of the fortress, or to land their cargo. They even managed to turn the tables on their wily foe by enticing on board some leading

Turks and detaining them there as hostages for Sharpeigh and his associates in misfortune. Rejib Aga, when he heard how he had been outwitted, used "vile words" to Sharpeigh, but did not dare to make any further hostile move.

The strain after this relaxed to a certain extent and some trading transactions were carried through. But the main purpose of the visit, the establishment of a factory, was as far off realization as ever. It was, therefore, determined with Rejib Aga's consent to despatch Jourdain and a colleague named Glasscock overland to Mocha to make a personal application to the pasha for the requisite permission. The journey to-day is one which would be accompanied by considerable peril for Europeans, and at that time it must have been exceptionally dangerous, owing to the disturbed state of the country, which was in the throes of one of the periodic rebellions common to it. No incident of importance, however, marked the progress of the travellers. They arrived at Sana early in June, 1609, but only to discover that their expedition was fruitless, as the pasha resolutely declined to entertain the question of a factory. When they had exhausted their powers of persuasion they proceeded to Mocha, to find that the ships, with Sharpeigh at liberty and in command, had come on from Aden and had established themselves ashore with the friendly acquiescence of the local authorities. The extensive freedom which his countrymen permitted themselves in this enemy's territory astounded and alarmed Jourdain, who thought it very censurable in view of what had already happened. "But," he remarks with a shrewd insight into national character, "it is a general rule with the English that if they have but a parcel of fair words given them, (they think)

that they need noe more fear." Owing probably to Jourdain's representations the men were recalled to the ships, and on July 26 they departed for India.

News was long in reaching England from India in those days, and it was doubtless in entire ignorance of the treatment accorded to Sharpeigh that the imposing fleet under Sir Henry Middleton was directed to make the development of the Aden and Arabian trade its first work in the East. November, 1610, found the ships safely at anchor in Aden harbour. The visitors, like their predecessors, were not prepossessed with the outlook. It seemed to their minds, vividly coloured with the impressions of the Homeland, to be a ghastly Ultima Thule upon which the spirits of Destiny had placed an irrevocable ban of infertility. Signs of habitation they could see none, apart from a few buildings near the shore. Everywhere the eye ranged over a black expanse of brown rock, rising precipitously in places to fantastically-shaped pinnacles whose outlines were sharply defined in the glare of the tropical sunlight. Stretching away to the North until its rocky ridges were lost in the shimmering haze was a coastline as desolate and forbidding as the rest, with no indication that human life found support anywhere in its vicinity. But the explanation of the mystery was soon forthcoming to the visitors. They discovered that the settlement was situated in a hollow at the foot of "an unfruitfull mountain," where a town could hardly have been suspected to exist. Like Sharpeigh's men they were struck with the natural strength of the place, which they considered was "not easily to be won, if the defenders within be men of resolution."

Since the visit of the *Ascension* and her consort, Rejib Aga had been promoted to the position of governor of

Mocha, but his successor not unworthily upheld his traditions. Immediately the English ships appeared the old treacherous game began. A present sent by Middleton to the governor brought in return a gift of "two Barbary sheep with broad rumps, and small tails, and some plantains and other fruit." Deceived by the "fair words" of the officials Middleton decided to leave the *Peppercorn* to trade at Aden while he went on to Mocha with the other two ships, the *Trade's Increase* and the *Darling*. After his departure it became speedily evident that the governor's intentions were the reverse of amiable. When he found that in accordance with instructions Middleton left behind that no cargo was to be landed, he schemed to get some of the Englishmen into his power.

Downton, who was now in charge, was asked to send the merchants to him to discuss the question of trade. Without any suspicion of what was at the back of the request the English commander despatched two factors to the governor's residence. They had no sooner reached the house than they were made prisoners with the intimation that they would be detained until an extortionate demand in respect of anchorage dues had been satisfied. Downton utterly declined to allow himself to be blackmailed in this fashion. Nor was he intimidated by a threat which reached him later that if the demand was not satisfied the factors would be hanged on the beach in full view of the *Peppercorn*. But he found as the days slipped by without any sign of the governor relenting that he would either have to sacrifice the valuable lives of the captives or submit to the extortion. Cargo to the value of the amount demanded was accordingly landed under conditions which secured the release of the Company's representatives.

Downton, freed from the anxieties of the local situation, took immediate measures to bring his unprofitable sojourn at Aden to a close. A desire to end his association with the rascally ruler of the place was not his only inspiring motive. In consequence of "dreames by night and disturbing notions by day" he greatly feared that all was not well with Middleton, and was anxious to proceed to Mocha to see how matters really stood. Quitting Aden on December 16, he five days later dropped anchor by the side of the *Trade's Increase* in Mocha roads. His forebodings of ill were only too well grounded. He arrived at the Red Sea port to find Middleton and a considerable number of his men in captivity and the entire expedition threatened with disaster owing to the hostility of the native authorities.

The story of Middleton's experiences, as Downton afterwards heard it, was a record of misfortune and black treachery. On arrival off Mocha the *Trade's Increase* ran aground and was only floated off with difficulty after the landing of a good part of her cargo. Middleton soon got into touch with Rejib Aga, who at once put in motion the now familiar confidence trick. He placed a house at Middleton's disposal for the accommodation of his merchandise, set guards about it and in other ways indicated a desire to provide every facility for the visitors. A certain quantity of goods was disembarked to form stock for what seemed to promise to be a profitable adventure. Rejib Aga took a suspiciously lively interest in all the landing operations. He appeared notably anxious that the most valuable part of the cargo should be available ashore and made repeated inquiries as to the disposal of the goods. The day arrived at last when it was made perfectly clear that the work of

disembarkation was over. The time had now almost come for "the dissembling Turk" to throw off the mask.

In a spirit of plausible amiability Rejib Aga approached Middleton with a suggestion that he should allow himself to be invested in the name of the pasha with "the Grand Senior's Vest," to which such dignity attached that once clothed in it the wearer might go about without fear of harm. It was insinuated that if this offer was not accepted Middleton would be regarded with suspicion. The English commander distrusted this intense desire to thrust honour upon him, but on reflection it seemed to him that there was less danger in acceptance than in refusal, more especially as he would have to pass several months in the port, owing to the unsuitability of the season for the resumption of his voyage. He accordingly decided to go through the ceremony.

On the appointed day he landed and was met by the governor and principal men of the town, who accompanied him in great state to the official residence. Here with much ceremony he was clad in a rich vest of cloth of gold and was then conducted to a gorgeously-caparisoned horse, which he was invited to mount, while the governor held the stirrup. Afterwards solemn protestations of friendship were offered by Rejib Aga, who seemed overpowered with the desire to convince his guest of the warmth of his feelings. The glittering farce was not without its effect on the simple-minded Englishman. He could not conceive such a depth of infamy as that descended to by the wily Greek for the furtherance of his ends.

Without a shadow of distrust Middleton accepted the invitation offered him to make the fullest use of the port. His first thought was of a pinnace which had been brought

out in sections and which he badly needed for local trading purposes. A site near the shore was procured without difficulty for the projected work of reconstruction, and soon a large gang of men were employed, under the carpenter's supervision, upon the business. As evening approached the men withdrew to the vicinity of the house allotted for the accommodation of the goods. There, revelling in the unwonted freedom of shore liberty, they engaged in innocent recreations. One had brought a treble viol and another a cornet, and soon the white walls of Mocha resounded to the strange sounds of English music. Middleton and the higher officials were either of the company or in its immediate vicinity. There was a general disposition to take relaxation after the heat of the day and to forget for a time the difficulties of the enterprise which had before loomed so menacingly upon the horizon.

Bitterly had the Englishmen cause to regret their too confiding disposition. Without a moment's warning they were attacked by a large body of armed men, who had quietly surrounded them as they were amusing themselves. Effective resistance was out of the question. Most of the men were quite unarmed, and the small number who had weapons were not in a position to use them to advantage. Nevertheless, a few did make a show of opposition, paying with their lives for their temerity. In a very short time the whole party were either captives or dead men. The survivors numbered fifty-nine, and included, besides Middleton, Laurence Femell, the chief factor, and some other members of the merchant staff.

Elated at the success of his plans Rejib Aga decided to follow it up by an attack on the ships before they could hear of the disaster which had overwhelmed their com-

mander and his men. In the darkness of the night several boats full of armed men put off from the shore, marking out the *Darling* for their prey. Stealthily approaching the vessel the raiders were able to swarm on board, not only without opposition but without detection. The unfortunate look-out man, who was asleep in the rigging, paid with his life for his dereliction of duty. The ship was apparently won without a blow being struck in its defence. But the assailants had reckoned without the bravery of an English crew in a tight place. As soon as the *Darling's* men realized the state of affairs they rallied to the fight with a desperate determination which carried all before it. In a short space of time the deck was cleared of the intruders, who were either killed or forced back into their boats to make an ignominious flight to land. Twenty-seven Turks, including "the admiral of the town," who was their leader, fell in the fight. Of the *Darling's* crew, only two were killed, though several others were severely wounded. It was a gallant defence, which served to instil the Turks with a wholesome respect for their visitors, and to ensure for the vessels an immunity from further attack.

CHAPTER VII

A Gallant but Unfortunate Commander

Downton schemes to release Middleton—Friction between Downton and Middleton—A reconciliation—Middleton effects his escape—Turns the tables on the enemy—Exacts redress—Femell, the factor, poisoned by Rejib Aga—Middleton proceeds with his fleet to Surat—Unable to trade owing to combined native and Portuguese opposition—Returns to the Red Sea—Institutes a blockade—Dissensions amongst the commanders—Middleton raises the blockade and proceeds to Bantam—Destruction of the *Trade's Increase*—Death of Middleton—His character.

NOTHING could be done by those on the ships in Mocha harbour to help their unfortunate comrades whom Rejib Aga had seized in the circumstances described. Indeed, it was not until the middle of December, nearly three weeks after the attack, that it was possible to get into communication with them. It was then found by means of a messenger sent ashore with a flag of truce that Middleton and the principal men were in close captivity, chained together, while the members of the crew and those of lesser rank were kept at work on the pinnace, which Rejib Aga had set his mind on possessing. The story that the envoy brought back was that the bulk of the prisoners were shortly to be released, but that the commander and his leading colleagues were to be sent to the pasha at Sana.

It was at about this juncture that Downton appeared on the scene with the *Peppercorn*. He got at once into touch

with Middleton from whom he learned that there was no immediate hope of his and his fellow-captives' release. Finding that there was nothing to be done for the time being, Downton took the *Darling* and the *Peppercorn* over to the Abyssinian coast to secure fresh supplies, and gave the vessels a much-needed overhauling. He returned to the old anchorage later to find that Middleton and all the captives "with the exception of the carpenters and the hurt men" had been despatched to Sana, where the rigours of their treatment had been somewhat relaxed. On the occasion of this transfer Pemberton, one of the factors, managed to give the guard the slip and get away to the coast, where he found a canoe in which, after suffering many hardships, he managed to make good his escape. His presence in the fleet facilitated intercourse with Middleton, between whom and Downton and others on board the ships he maintained a regular correspondence.

Pemberton was anxious to have the commander follow his example, and suggested to him that by disguising himself in Oriental apparel, cutting his hair from his face and "besmutting" his skin he might easily get away. He intimated that he himself would have shaved his beard and disguised himself to have effected this business, but doubted whether his "pock-eated face" with "some kind of show" on the part of the men would not have betrayed him. Middleton declined to entertain any suggestion of escape in which he alone would be concerned. He rightly perceived that even if he secured his freedom the difficulties of the situation would not be lessened.

Downton chafed under the delay which the continued detention of the prisoners imposed upon the fleet. He would have adopted energetic action, seized the Indian

ships at anchor and raided the local craft, if Middleton had not strongly interdicted such procedure on the ground that it would be perilous to him and his fellow-captives. For a time Downton acquiesced in the instructions, though reluctantly. But when as the weeks slipped by the confident expectations of an early release were not realized, he became restive in the presence of the re-iterated injunctions of his superior to do nothing. He wrote strongly to Middleton, telling him plainly that he must be the judge of what was best to do and intimating that he could accept no instructions which clashed with what he deemed to be necessary.

Middleton took umbrage at this frankness and replied in what Downton described as "a very carping and most distasteful letter." The relations between the two old friends seemed to threaten a rupture, but happily the good sense of each saved the situation. Downton, more in sorrow than in anger, wrote saying how hurt he was at the tone of Middleton's missive and intimating that he would write no more letters for mischief-makers to "cant, construe and cavil at." To this Middleton replied with a "very kind letter," asking Downton not to take the worst view of his last "melancholy letter," which, he explained, was written under circumstances of great mental depression. The frank and manly acknowledgment of error went home to the sensitive heart of Downton, who now cheerfully carried out Middleton's orders to take his ships to Assab Bay on the opposite coast of the Red Sea, and have them careened with a view to future eventualities.

About this time news reached Downton of the arrival at Mocha of a number of small craft from Swes (Suez). There are other references subsequently to this traffic down

the Red Sea. It was no doubt a relic of the trade, which from the remotest ages had been conducted from the Egyptian ports in the Gulf of Suez to the Indian Ocean—to the coast of East Africa on the one hand and to India and Malaya on the other. At this juncture there seems to have been little left of the once mighty commerce. As much may be gathered from Downton's gloomy vaticinations about the hopelessness of the trade, a fact which was illustrated by the curiosity with which a "piece of eight," given in exchange for commodities, was passed from hand to hand at Aden, as if nothing like it had ever been seen previously.

As the season wore on the prospects of the release of the captives by the voluntary action of the authorities grew more remote, but all the time Middleton was awaiting his opportunity, and it came at last on May 15. On that day he and a number of others made a bold bid for freedom. They had carefully prepared the way for their flight by lavishly plying their guards with *aqua vitæ*, supplies of which had been sent ashore for the purpose by Pemberton. When the men were sufficiently under the influence of the liquor, Middleton, who had explained his plan in advance to all whom he felt he could trust, gave the signal for the flight. One by one the captives left the house in which they were confined and proceeded to a point on the shore where a boat from the *Darling* was waiting to take them off. Middleton was too well known to make it safe for him to proceed openly through the streets. He therefore concealed himself in a cask, and this was carried to the rendezvous on the beach by some men whose services had been obtained for the purpose.

As quickly as possible the commander and sixteen of his

men embarked. By this time the hue and cry had been raised, and the boat had to be pushed off, though some stragglers were still in sight. Amongst these unfortunates was Femell, whose "unwieldy fatness" made his progress slow. Afterwards the factor in a letter complained bitterly to Middleton of "the foolish dealing of that idiot and white-livered fellow, the coxswain," who, seeing Femell and those with him hardly pursued, failed to respond to the frantic signals made to him to bring the boat in, with the consequence that, though up to their armpits in the water, the fugitives were captured. Femell consoled himself to some extent with the reflection that he had done some execution with his pistol on the pursuing soldiers before he was taken.

Once on board the *Darling* Middleton again became master of the situation. He acted with promptitude and resolution. Having sent off a pinnace to Downton, who was at Assab Bay with the *Trade's Increase* and the *Peppercorn*, he forwarded an intimation to Rejib Aga that he was resolved to make himself extremely unpleasant if the remaining captives were not released and full compensation paid for the injuries inflicted upon him and his colleagues.

Almost at once the aspect of affairs changed. The Indian merchants, fearful of the consequences which they apprehended would involve their ships, waited upon Femell with a peace offering in the shape of "two sheep, one great basket of rice, another great basket of bread and some green ginger." Meanwhile, a lively exchange of compliments was proceeding between Rejib Aga and Middleton. The latter in reply to a defiant message declared that he would not forbear to burn the Indian ships which belonged to his friends rather than that he should lose the opportunity of revenge upon so vile a traitor. Though Rejib Aga

bragged that he was governor by land as Middleton was by sea, his government had been such as to discredit him and before long his crimes would cost him his head. "If," proceeded the infuriated commander, "I shoot at the town he saith he will requite me with the like, which he cannot do as you well know, because his ordnance is far inferior to mine. Whereas he saith for any harm I do amends must be made, amends is already made for any harm I do them. Though I should fire the town and beat it smooth about their ears, whether it be pleasing or displeasing to the Grand Seignor, I care not. I am out of reach of his long sword, and for the treasonable wrongs that Rejib Aga and the Basha have done me he doeth well to bring the Grand Seignor as a party therein: let the Basha and Rejib Aga likewise consider that the King of England will not take well the betraying, robbing and murdering of his subjects to the great dishonour of the Grand Seignor and their nation."

This spirited letter was promptly followed up by the seizure of one of the largest of the Indian ships in port. Rejib Aga now began to "sing a new song," as one of the English factors tersely put it in a letter. He sent on board some personal belongings of the captives, together with a present of oxen and other fresh supplies. At the same time he wrote suggesting that the questions at issue should be submitted to the Grand Seignor at Constantinople and that they should part friends. Apparently the bearer of the missive was also entrusted with some Arabic charm which was intended to be a symbol of the era of amity that it was hoped would now open. Middleton had been fooled too often to be influenced by these belated manifestations of friendship. In reply he wrote—

"You sent me a foolish paper: what it is I know not, nor care not. In God is my trust and, therefore, respect not what the devil or you can do with your charms."

The uncompromising attitude assumed by the sturdy Commander produced its effect on the wily and cowardly Greek. Before the month was out he had sent off to the ships the captives and restored the impounded pinnace, with certain of the goods which had been landed. Poor Femell, however, did not live to share in the triumph of Middleton's rough diplomacy. He died suddenly on May 28 from some mysterious complaint. Poison was suspected, and a post mortem examination made by the surgeons on the fleet confirmed the accuracy of the surmise. It was afterwards discovered that on the night before his death Femell had been entertained at dinner by Rejib Aga. In the course of the repast, conversation turning on the events of the period, the factor incautiously threatened to make complaint of his wrongs at Constantinople. At parting the Greek, with a sardonic smile, said to his guest—"We shall meet at Stamboula (Constantinople)."

He no doubt took seriously the Englishman's threat and acted on the principle—a favourite one with him—that dead men tell no tales. That he had some reason to fear a representation at headquarters is suggested by the fact that as a consequence of the affair of the English fleet he was afterwards removed from his post.

About the middle of June the shahbunder, or port officer of Mocha, escorted by many of the chief merchants of the town, and accompanied by "divers sorts of music," went in state to Middleton's ship to arrange terms of peace. At the conference which followed a settlement was reached by which it was agreed that 18,000 reals should be paid as com-

pensation, and that as there was not so much money in Mocha, the cargo of the Indian ship should be accepted as security. Middleton would probably have demanded more had he not been well aware that the fine would come out of the pockets of the Indian merchants, who had shown themselves good friends of the captives in the days of their adversity. On July 2, when all the details had been adjusted, the shahbunder, on taking his departure for the shore, was honoured with a salute of three guns, a compliment which he no doubt greatly appreciated. Nothing now remained for Middleton but to complete his arrangements for the resumption of his long-delayed voyage. Before quitting Mocha, it is interesting to know, he entrusted the shahbunder with letters "to be forwarded to London by way of Messa, or Grand Cairo as we call it." In so doing he made use of the overland route which more than two centuries later was to be adopted for the regular transmission of the Indian mails through the exertions of the indefatigable Lieutenant Waghorn.

As Aden and Mocha had proved hopeless for trade, Middleton naturally turned to India to seek to find there some compensation for his heavy disappointments. But he had no sooner arrived off Surat than he found himself confronted with the violent opposition of the Portuguese, reinforced by the ill-will of the Mogul authorities. After more or less futile efforts to establish relations with the shore, Middleton took his fleet to Dabul, a port to the southwards, off which he anchored for purposes of revictualling. Here a sort of council of war was held to determine the course of action which should be followed.

We have a vivid light thrown upon the uncertainties and perplexities of the hour as they appeared to the harassed

commanders in a paper which Downton has left on record, in which the position is discussed with a gloomy determination to face the facts, however unpalatable they might be. He descanted upon the lamentable outcome thus far of this voyage "begun with glory (which drew great expectations in all estates) and set out with great charges," showing how after two years' travel they found themselves with "our victuals spent, our ship's cables and furniture far worn, men's wages for twenty-four months already past, ourselves deluded and abused in most places we have come to."

The real question they had to face, he said, was "whether better we wish a languishing end or a shameful return." After many dark communings Downton came to the conclusion that the best hope of retrieving the well-nigh desperate situation was to repair to the Red Sea and attempt to obtain satisfaction there for the injuries done at Aden. This was the decision ultimately arrived at by the commanders, and it was promptly acted upon, much to the relief of the Portuguese, who had been thrown into a state of great consternation by the presence of the English ships at Dabul.

Arriving with his ships before Aden early in April, 1611, Middleton at once instituted a blockade. The operations were extended eventually to the Red Sea and were participated in to a certain extent by Captain John Saris with two ships of the fleet of the seventh voyage, which had been intercepted in the vicinity of the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb. But Saris's heart was not in the work and serious disagreements arose between the two commanders on questions of policy as well as with regard to the apportionment of the compensation as soon as it should be obtained. At last, when the dispute had become an open rupture, Saris went

off with his ships without paying the usual parting compliment of a salute to his colleague. Middleton was greatly incensed at this conduct, and though he tried to put the best face on the situation he soon came to realize that the attempt to extract further monetary advantage out of the misfortunes of the past was illusory. With a heavy heart, he, about the middle of August, ordered his ships to follow in the wake of the *Hector* and the *Clove* to Bantam.

On arrival at Teco in Sumatra, Middleton heard of the safe arrival home of Captain David Middleton and his fleet of the eighth voyage, that of the four ships of the ninth voyage two had already reached Bantam, and that news had been received of the advent of fifteen Dutch ships as well as two vessels from France. The information was received with a feeling of depression by Middleton and his associates, reflecting as it did the failure of their own, "tried, crost and decayed voyage."

When the *Trade's Increase* and her consorts reached Bantam the vessels were found to be in such a decayed condition, owing to their long and arduous service, that an extensive refitting was imperatively necessary. Having deliberated upon the position, Middleton decided to load the *Peppercorn*, after a partial overhaul, with spice and dispatch her to England with Downton, and to send the *Darling* to Patani, on the north-east coast of the Malay Peninsula. The *Trade's Increase*, it was discovered, could not be again used without extensive repairs, which would occupy several months. The *Peppercorn's* fortunes have already been traced in an earlier chapter. It may now be stated that an untoward end was reached by both the other vessels. The *Darling*, on arrival at Patani, was found to be too unseaworthy for further use and was broken up.

The *Trade's Increase*, of which such great expectations had been entertained, whilst careened at Bantam, was set on fire by a renegade Spaniard, who appears to have had some grudge against the Company. What was left of her was sold for 1,050 reals.

Overwhelmed by the destruction of all his hopes, and enfeebled by his hardships, Middleton died at Bantam on May 24, 1613. He was a brave soul, who deserved better things than this obscure end in an unfriendly land. His voyage was an uninterrupted series of misfortunes and difficulties, and of personal hardships of an uncommon kind. Yet who shall say that he suffered in vain? Sir Dudley Digges, nearly three centuries ago, described him as "the thrice worthy general who laid the true foundation of our long-desired Cambaya trade." It was not an exaggerated tribute paid by a contemporary in the fulness of a generous sympathy, but the settled conviction of a discriminating judge, and its justice has been completely vindicated by time. The more we know of the period in which Middleton filled the stage of adventure in the East, the greater is the figure he and his fine old colleague, the rugged Downton, present upon it. His courageous assertion of the rights of Englishmen trampled under foot by a mean and despicable tool of a leading Oriental power won respect for the English name not only in the immediate scene of his operations, but in a wide sphere outside, to which the news in due course penetrated. But the qualities which most fired the Oriental imagination and produced the greatest moral effect were the justice and moderation he showed when the fortunes of war had placed him in a position to be cruel and exacting. His uniformly generous treatment of the Indian ships which he captured or

overhauled in the course of his operations against the Turks, made a tremendous impression in an age and a region in which the rule of the sea was the might of the strongest. Carried by the Indian nacodahs, or captains, to India, the account of the mildness and fair dealing of this great strong man, who did not hesitate to bring to book the insolent minions of the dreaded Grand Seignor, excited a lively feeling of friendship and gratitude and did much beyond question to pave the way for that early concession to the English of the full right to trade which was of such vital importance to our nation in the subsequent struggle for commercial supremacy on the Indian Peninsula.

CHAPTER VIII

English and Portuguese Rivalry

Unfavourable English prospects in India—Thomas Best conducts a fleet to India—Is attacked by the Portuguese—Defeat of the Portuguese with great loss—Mogul authorities grant a *firman* to trade at Surat—Mogul Government declares war on the Portuguese—Downton arrives off Surat with a fleet—Is attacked in Swally roads by the Portuguese—He beats off his assailants—The Rev. Peter Rogers attacks Downton—Death of Downton—His patriotic virtues

THOUGH the servants of the East India Company were for a time disposed to dissipate their energies in a vain endeavour to break down the barrier of Mohammedan fanaticism and obstructiveness in the Red Sea, they at the same time displayed a splendid prescience in holding on to their project for opening a trade with India through Surat. Neither Mogul intrigues nor Portuguese hostility served to turn them from their purpose. With possibly a vague consciousness of the mighty issues which depended on their successful action they returned again and again to the charge with increased determination to effect a permanent lodgment on Indian soil. The fates so far had not been propitious. There was, indeed, at the point at which we have arrived, substantial reason for abandoning as hopeless the purpose in view. Hawkins had left the country on Middleton's ship, discredited and humiliated; the Emperor, if not hostile to the English, was little disposed to favour them; the Surat authorities

were openly antagonistic; while in the background loomed menacingly the Portuguese, who understood only too well that the triumph of the English would presage the downfall of their own power. In the circumstances, Middleton's departure seemed to close the entire chapter of English endeavour in this region. But as has often happened in the strange, eventful history of British domination in the East, when the hour of national destiny was at its darkest there was a dramatic transformation of the situation in a favourable sense.

In this crisis in the affairs of the English at Surat the determining factor was the arrival in Indian waters at the close of 1612 of two of the Company's ships, the *Red Dragon* and the *Osiander*, commanded by Thomas Best. It was an insignificant squadron, measured even by the standard of that day. The *Red Dragon's* tonnage was only 600 and the *Osiander* was a mere pinnace. Altogether, the crews of these vessels did not exceed 250 in number. But if the "fleet" was weak in numbers, it had the supreme advantage of being commanded by a man of exceptional ability and force of character, who was able to inspire the crews with some of that spirit of lofty idealism which has done so much in all times to build up the British Empire.

Best in his younger days had accompanied Frobisher on his Arctic voyages, and by that experience had qualified himself as a skilled navigator. He is revealed later as a merchant of some standing residing in Ratcliff and Limehouse. The combination of mariner and trader doubtless recommended him for the responsible position of commander of the *Red Dragon*. Nor can we suppose that the Company's directorate, in which there was a strong leaven of Puritanism, was otherwise than favourably influenced by

the seriousness of his outlook on life, for he was a man of deep piety as may be gathered from the records of the voyage. His disposition is well reflected in the regulations which he drew up for the conduct of the men under his charge. In these the sternness of a rigid disciplinarian is mingled with the finer qualities of a just and upright man. Those found guilty of theft were for the first offence to be "grievously punished," and if they offended a second time they were to be liable to the death penalty. Every man was "to carry himself with sobriety and meekness towards the people of the country that justly of our partes no offence is given." There were heavy penalties for swearing and cursing. "For the first oathe sworne or for the first time cursing or baneninge (the offender) to receive three blows from ye Master with the bole of his wissle, for the second time six, for the third nine and for the fourth to stand for 24 hours in the bilbowes without either meat or drink and for every time hereafter." Fighting was strictly prohibited. No challenge was to be given "under paine of 40 strippes upon the bare back, and to stand in the bilbowes at the discretion of the general." Then, following upon other articles, came this invocation as a final rule of conduct: "The God of Peace so order and guide us that we may continue in all piety and love each towards the other, according to place and calling; that the end of this our voyage may be with more glory to God and better reformation of our sinful lives than the beginning thereof, and that by our example other men may be encouraged and stirred up to like laudable enterprises."

A man of this character was not at all likely to be deterred from the pursuit of a purpose upon which he had deliberately embarked, and so the sequel proved. As far

as the native authorities were concerned, Best found the way smooth for his plans. Middleton's strong yet considerate policy in handling the Indian trading ships had, as we have stated, produced a distinctly favourable impression. A further advantage was that Makarrab Khan had fallen from power and that the new governor was disposed to be friendly to the English on his own account, apart from the influence of the local traders. No difficulty, therefore, was encountered at the outset in carrying on trade ashore. But the Englishmen had not been long established in Surat before rumours reached them of the big preparations that were being made at Goa to drive them away from the coast.

When the floating gossip crystallized into definite information that a fleet of four large galleons was being equipped for his undoing, Best took measures to meet the danger. His two ships were carefully overhauled in order to ensure the utmost effectiveness of their powers of offence and defence. Having assured himself by personal inspection that his orders had been carried out in every particular, Best caused the crews to be mustered and addressed them.

In his speech to the men of the *Osiander*, which the purser of the ship reported for the information of posterity, he told them that though the Portuguese were far superior to them in strength, they need not fear, as their opponents were "base and cowardly," and that it was a common saying: "Who so cowardly as a Portugall?" From his own experiences in the past he knew that after the first bravado was over they were "very cowards." He appealed to them as "Englishmen famous over the world for trew valour" to acquit themselves like men, "to put their trust in God and not fear death." He reminded them that death was the inevitable lot of man, and said that they

could not die in a better cause " than in behalf of so worthy a country as we have, the Commonwealth of our land. 'For death,' saith he, 'is the passing to heaven.' He showed a saying of David in his sixteenth Psalm, towards the latter end, 'I will set God always before me, for He is on my right hand; therefore I shall not fall.'" Then, turning his discourse to mundane affairs, Best promised that in the event of any of them falling in the fight or being grievously wounded, the Company would do their duty by their relatives or by them. Finally, the commander "took a cup of wine and drunk to our master (the commander of the *Osiander*) and to the Company, and desired God to give us His blessing and so returned aboard his own ship to sermon."

It now devolved upon Best to decide the important question of how he should engage the Portuguese. Should he remain at the anchorage in the confined and shallow roads at Swally and allow himself to be attacked, or should he go out to meet the enemy? There was a good deal to be said for both plans, but as may be supposed the bolder course appealed to the dour fighting instinct of the commander. Nor did he show any hesitation when he actually got into the fight as to the direction of the attack. As the four great galleons, with their attendant flotilla, came up with the wind, making a very imposing display, he singled out the vice-admiral's ship, and when two cables' length from it "began to play upon it with great and small shot (so) that by an hour we had well peppered him with some fiftie-six great shot."

On the enemy's side the fire was very ineffective, and when night closed on the ships the only serious damage which had been done was the destruction of the *Dragon's*

long boat. The next morning the fight was renewed by Best with such vigour that in a very short time three of the enemy's smaller craft were ashore. As the *Osiander* drew little water she was able to get to close quarters with the stranded galleons. She used her guns to good purpose—or to adopt the words of an eyewitness of the episode she "danced the hay about them, and so payed them that they durst not show a man on their decks." Afterwards the engagement continued with varying fortunes until the approach of night enforced a cessation of the firing. Soon after daybreak on November 30 the enemy's ships, which had grounded, floated off and were attacked by the *Dragon*, gallantly assisted by the *Osiander*. At this stage of the contest a well directed shot from the enemy killed the *Osiander's* boatswain and did other damage, For hours the fighting continued in desultory fashion, and night again fell upon the combatants without any decisive result being reached. While the English ships were at anchor a frigate was sent against them in the darkness, but its approach being opportunely discovered it was sunk by some well directed shots and her crew of eighty were drowned.

There was now a lull in the contest. The Portuguese did not appear to relish the idea of coming to close quarters with Best, and on his part the English commander felt that the odds against him were too great to justify a vigorous initiative. For some days the combatants manœuvred against each other at points along the coast, and this continued until some weeks later, when the Portuguese, having obtained new supplies, again challenged the English ships. The action lasted, with intermissions, until the end of the third day. At this stage the Portuguese,

finding that they could make no impression upon their stubborn enemy, finally abandoned the enterprise, leaving Best to return unmolested to Surat.

The advantage was markedly on the side of the English. At the expenditure of only a few lives they had successfully resisted an attack by a powerful fleet of the enemy. Apart from the losses inflicted upon the Portuguese, which were heavy, the English had damaged them severely in reputation and had correspondingly exalted their own prestige. By their spirited action they had confirmed the impression already made by Middleton that the English were a nation to be reckoned with on the sea where hitherto the Portuguese had been unchallenged masters.

Almost at once the English reaped the advantage of their victory in a marked strengthening of their position on land. A *firman*, or charter, permitting them to trade at Surat, which had previously been under discussion, was now ratified. It came down from Agra in the form of a private letter. In other circumstances Best might have been glad to receive it in this form, but his victory had given him confidence, and with a shrewd conception of native character he demanded that the document should be submitted in proper form. Assenting to this, the local officials, with the shahbunder at their head, went in state on January 11, 1613, to hand over the *firman*. The date is important as the first substantial landmark in the history of the British in India. As far as the concession itself was concerned it was found afterwards not to amount to much. The Mogul Government gave the very least they could, and in a form in which subsequent repudiation would be easy. Best, however, did not at the time realize this. With the consciousness of good work done he sailed

with his ships for England within a week of the delivery of the *firman.*

With the departure of the English ships the Portuguese plucked up courage. In retaliation for the privileges conceded to the English they seized a large Guzerat ship near the mouth of the Tapti and carried it off to Goa. The action, instead of intimidating the Mogul, aroused his wrath. He instantly declared war on the Portuguese, and followed up the declaration by seizing all subjects of the Goa Government he could lay his hands on. Meanwhile, Makarrab Khan was sent with a large force to besiege the Portuguese settlement of Damaun on the Western India coast south of Surat.

A splendid opportunity now offered for the English if they had been in the position to avail themselves of it. But for many months after Best's departure the sole representatives of the East India Company in India were a handful of factors, with Thomas Aldworth as the chief agent at Surat. Day after day during the season the horizon was anxiously scanned for the familiar flag, but no English ship appeared. As the season wore on without the expected fleet the attitude of the Mogul authorities changed. They treated the *firman* as of no binding force, and without being actually hostile acted in such a way as to sterilize completely the efforts of the Englishmen. In spite of all Aldworth held tenaciously on to his position and by so doing probably saved the situation. The *pied à terre* which he defended and preserved, at all events, was of inestimable value in the subsequent operations which led directly up to the establishment of English influence in India on a stable basis.

In the middle of October, 1614, the long and eagerly

awaited English fleet arrived off Surat. It consisted of four vessels—*New Year's Gift, Hector, Merchants' Hope* and *Salmon*—under the command of Nicholas Downton. Their arrival worked a fresh change in the situation. From being a negligible quantity the English became a factor of the utmost importance. Makarrab Khan promptly sought to enlist the aid of the ships in his operations against the Portuguese, assuming that as the quarrel had been forced upon the Mogul by his bestowal of favours upon the English, the latter would help him out of the difficulty. Downton, however, was not in the mood to take risks. His naturally cautious disposition had been strengthened by the misfortunes which had overtaken Middleton's voyage through an undue resort to belligerency. He hoped to be able to trade without entering into the quarrel on either side, and in any event he did not wish to risk his ships for the advantage of "the Moors," who had hitherto not shown an abounding affection for the English. His benevolent neutrality was at first construed by the Moguls into an intention to side with the Portuguese, and they resented it accordingly. But any obscurity that there might have been about the position of affairs was soon dissipated by the Portuguese, who plainly indicated that they regarded Downton's fleet as not less enemy's ships than Best's two vessels. In the last days of the year they sent to him an insolent demand to retire from Indian waters. Downton treated the suggestion with proper contempt, but he could not fail to recognize that whether he desired it or not he had got to take a hand—and an important one—in this dispute.

Downton was a brave and capable commander and as a man possessed many estimable qualities, but he was some-

what heavy witted and lacked the foresight desirable in one who had to conduct strategical operations. When, on January 14, the Portuguese fleet from Goa appeared off the port instead of adopting Best's plan of going out to engage it where he would have plenty of sea room and consequently scope for the exercise of his peculiar skill he remained at anchor at Swally in the confined roadstead which Sir Thomas Roe afterwards contemptuously but not inaptly described as "a fishpond." The blunder might have been fatal if to his temperamental shortcomings Downton had added a lack of courage. But he was as brave as a lion and as tenacious as a bulldog, and the balance was, as will be seen, redressed by these splendid qualities.

The Portuguese had made the most elaborate preparations for the fight. They were determined, if possible, to deliver a crushing blow which would not only settle the immediate difficulty but serve as a definite and final notice to their English rivals to quit the shores of India. The force they got together for this purpose consisted of six large galleons, two smaller ships and sixty small ships called frigates, with, in addition, two galleys and sundry insignificant craft. On the galleons were the flower of the Portuguese nobility, all imbued with a keen hatred of the *hereticos* and a fixed determination to destroy them or die in the attempt. The whole were under the command of Don Jeronimo, one of the most distinguished of the Portuguese functionaries in the East at the time.

A day or two passed after the appearance of the Portuguese fleet without anything of importance happening. "In order to give an edge to their courage," as a letter written at the period puts it, Downton caused the *Mer-*

chants' Hope to anchor some distance away from the other ships towards the entrance of the roadstead. The bait, if it were such, was readily swallowed. Before Downton realized what was happening the *Merchants' Hope* was heavily engaged by three of the enemy's smaller ships and by a great number of frigates. The onslaught was so determined that it looked for a time very much as if the vessel would be captured. The first volley from the Portuguese ships brought down the *Merchants' Hope's* main top and slew a number of her crew. Following this came a desperate attempt to board her, made with a reckless courage which belied the popular English conception of the Lusitanian of that time.

The fight waxed hot as English and Portuguese contested hand to hand on the bloodstained deck. Overwhelming odds must in the end have prevailed if at the nick of time Downton had not come up with his ships and created a welcome diversion. The Portuguese now began to give way. Seeing their movement the English renewed the fight with increased zest. Soon the bulk of the attacking party were flying over the sides in a helterskelter rush for their boats. Their flight was their undoing.

The English ships, getting to a nicety the range, plied the fugitives with shot large and small until many of the frigates were destroyed and the water was reddened with the blood of the unfortunate victims. Altogether between three hundred and four hundred fell in the fight, the number including scions of some of the noblest houses in Portugal. On the English side the casualties were small, being confined almost entirely to the crew of the *Merchants' Hope.*

The blow was a heavy one, but Don Jeronimo declined

to accept it as decisive. As he could not overcome the English in direct conflict in the light of day he determined to see what could be accomplished at night by strategy. About a fortnight afterwards when darkness had fallen he sent down the river with the tide a number of frigates with two fireships. The latter fouled the *Merchants' Hope's* hawser and would probably have set her on fire if those on the ship had not seen the danger and taken measures to remove the dangerous craft to a safe distance. The next night another attempt of the same character was made and was attended with a like result. Convinced at length that the English fleet was not to be overcome Don Jeronimo on the following morning set sail for the South, leaving Downton to enjoy the fruits of his well-earned victory. The most immediate of these was the bestowal of the favour of the native authorities in a very practical form. The governor sent on board the English ships bountiful supplies, accompanied by flattering expressions of gratitude, and lavish promises of future benefits. He gave even more emphatic evidence of the impression that the recent events had made on him by resolutely rejecting overtures for peace which were tendered by the Portuguese. For the time being fortune decidedly smiled on the English at Surat.

Downton all this time was not without his pre-occupations. There had come down from Agra, whither he had been sent by the Company to act as chaplain—the first who filled that position in India—the Rev. Peter Rogers, a turbulent cleric who was at cross purposes with most of the staff at the Agra factory and who on arrival at Surat promptly fell out with Downton. It is difficult to gather what was the precise origin of the quarrel. From the

bitterness of Rogers' denunciations of the old commander the trouble might be assumed to be serious if we did not know from other sources the reverend gentleman's temperament. In a letter home he stated that Downton "delights not to stir much in the mud of his hypocritical courses," and he (the writer) had intended "in charity to pass by many gross abuses he hath offered me," yet "since this by God's Providence is timely come to light of that old soaked humour of his, of inveterate hatred and continuance where he once takes dislike" he felt bound to inform the Company that "the general is not the man you take him to be touching religion: he always illtreats his ministers; he neglects prayer on the week days, and very often on the Sabbath the exercises of religion, to the great offence and discouragement of many. He is much given to backbiting, and he has answered my fatherly remonstrances by saying scornfully that he could tell his duty better than I could advise him and such like demonstrances of pride and hypocrisy."

We may probably with safety regard this as the mere venomous outpouring of an ill-balanced mind. Downton doubtless had his faults, but that he was the hypocritical humbug that the irate chaplain would have us believe is contradicted by his whole career, the details of which are laid bare in documents emanating from sources independent of him. It seems likely that Downton had to exercise his disciplinary powers very sharply during his sojourn at Surat and that Rogers some time or other came under his lash. The commander's instructions to Aldworth on leaving Surat, quoted in an earlier chapter, at all events, are highly suggestive of friction.

That Rogers was not exactly a pattern of propriety is

only too clear from the correspondence of the period. He was one of a rather common type of those early Indian chaplains who gave the authorities considerable trouble by their inability to adapt themselves to the necessary discipline of the Company's factories. A contemporary of Rogers, a "preacher" named Gouldinge, greatly disturbed the harmony of the Indian establishment three years after the period with which we are dealing, by his very unclerical conduct at Surat. When a request which he had preferred to accompany Mrs. Hawkins and her English maid—the wife of Richard Steele—to Ahmedabad had been refused, he disguised himself in "Moor's apparel" and surreptitiously joined the ship in which the ladies were sailing. His vagaries and the attendant complications did much to harden the hearts of the directors against the appeals made by their servants in India to permit their wives to join them.

Whatever feelings may have been entertained against Downton he was soon to pass beyond the influence of his enemies. At Surat there were signs that his health had been seriously undermined by the hardships he had undergone in previous voyages. As the voyage progressed he became feebler day by day until in the unsavoury precincts of Bantam he was stricken with mortal illness and expired in 1615. Orme, the Indian historian, says that he died "lamented, admired and unequalled." That verdict may be accepted as the just record of posterity. There was something very attractive about the man. "His disposition," says Purchas, "savoured the true heroic, piety and valour being in him seasoned with gravity and modesty." He was essentially staunch and true, one who made no great fuss about his actions, but who

could be trusted to stick through thick and thin to a colleague in a difficulty. That he was unselfish follows from this as a matter of course. But it is necessary to study his career closely to realize the full height of the spirit of self-sacrifice which he more than once showed. His patriotism, too, was of a deep and abiding character. Next to his religious faith it was the strongest of his characteristics, colouring all his actions, and ever influencing his thoughts in times of crisis. A strong, essentially "straight" man he passes almost without question into the glorious company of Empire builders in the pages of history.

CHAPTER IX

An English Mission to the Court of the Great Mogul

Jehangir's attitude towards the English—Obstructions to trade—Sir Thomas Roe dispatched as ambassador—His early career—His reception by Jehangir—Opposition of Prince Khurrum and Asaf Khan—Roe out of favour with the Emperor—Is restor—to grace—Jehangir's partiality for Roe—The Emperor's jokes—Drinking bouts at the palace—An Oriental Hansard—Roe's difficulties

DECISIVE as was Downton's victory as far as the Portuguese were concerned its effect on the local situation was even more ephemeral than Best's action had proved. In a certain sense it even aggravated the difficulties, for it gave strength to the anti-English party at Court, who were not slow to point out that the war with the Portuguese had been brought about by the concessions made to the English. The position was made all the more unsatisfactory by the appointment to the government of Surat at this juncture of Prince Khurrum, a younger son of Jehangir, who afterwards figured in history as the Emperor Shah Jehan. The prince had always been inimical to the English, and he took up the government of Surat with a plain intention to make short work of these troublesome foreigners who had been disturbing the peace of the Western seaboard and introducing their riotous mode of living ashore. He was much too great a man to

soil his hands with the business himself, but he was careful to send in the person of his favourite, Zulfikar Khan, a competent instrument for the execution of his designs. In the ordering of this policy Prince Khurrum had at least the tacit assent of the Emperor. Somewhat earlier Jehangir had received at Court a representative of the Company named Edwards, who delivered to him a letter from James and some new presents, including an English mastiff, which had distinguished itself on its arrival by "pinching" to death a leopard that was pitted against it. The sporting Emperor had been greatly impressed with this incident and had received the fierce animal with something like enthusiasm. But when the novelty of the fighting mastiff had worn off, and he found that there were no more presents to be had, he assumed an attitude of contemptuous indifference towards the Company's representatives. One day, when Edwards was a little more importunate than usual at the durbar, the attendants, with blows and cuffs, bundled him contumeliously out of the presence, as they might have done some impudent beggar who had transgressed the laws of etiquette.

A circumstance which unquestionably militated against the English at the Mogul Court was their appearance there in the character of merchants. India at that period, and, indeed, still is the most aristocratic country in the world Nowhere are social traditions and prejudices more deeply rooted. Lofty unclimbable walls separate class from class and race from race. The basis of this rigid system is Hindu, but its broad essentials—the elevation of the warrior and priest and the depression of the trader—have been accepted by the Mohammedans, harmonizing as they do with their own ideals.

In Jehangir's reign the splendour of the Court life must have emphasized the barrier which custom interposed between those who bought and those who sold. Agra swarmed with merchants from all countries of Asia and some parts of Europe. They were, many of them, adventurers of a low type who cringed and fawned and flattered for a little gain. The whole atmosphere of the trading community must have been sordid to a degree if we may be guided by the conditions which obtain to-day at the capitals of the Indian states. In such circumstances the wonder is not that the English did not succeed, but that they accomplished anything. Probably the comparative friendliness of their reception was due to the personality of the earlier representatives of the Company combined with Jehangir's almost childish love of foreign novelties.

Not many years elapsed before the astute directors of the East India Company grasped the truth that their servants were not fitted by their status and training for the delicate work of diplomacy which had to be done in India. They quickly came to see that if an impression was to be made on the stone wall of Oriental prejudice it could only be through the agency of a duly accredited ambassador who would go out with all the prestige that would attach to a representative of the King. On being approached on the subject James I readily gave his consent to the dispatch of a special envoy, and in due course Sir Thomas Roe was selected for the office. Roe came of that good old city stock from which so many of the great families of England have sprung. His grandfather was Sir Thomas Rowe, or Roe, who was an Alderman of the City and filled the office of Sheriff in 1560, and was Lord Mayor in 1568. Born in 1581 the Sir Thomas Roe of our story, after matricu-

lating at Oxford in 1593, filled a minor position at Elizabeth's Court in the last year of the great Queen's reign, and, finding favour with James, was knighted by that monarch on March 23, 1604–5. Five years later we find him conducting a voyage of discovery to the West Indies and distinguishing himself as an explorer by sailing 200 miles up the mighty Amazon, then unknown to people in England, and subsequently navigating the coast as far as the Orinoco. He returned home in 1611, after an absence of eighteen months. On two subsequent occasions he visited the same region to prosecute further explorations. In 1614 he had entered the House of Commons as member for Tamworth, intent apparently on a public career at home, but the opportunity of proceeding to the East in the dignified position of ambassador offering he gladly seized it, as his fortunes were at a low ebb, and he had some time previously contracted a secret marriage with a lady of good family, for whom he desired to make provision.

Apart from his early Court training and the knowledge of the world which he had acquired on his exploring expeditions Roe was admirably qualified for the rôle of ambassador at an Oriental court. He had a tall and commanding presence and a natural air of dignity which well accorded with it. His manners were easy and courtly, while a native tact and shrewdness lent strength to a personality which outwardly was altogether agreeable. Such a combination of qualities would have been useful in any diplomatic mission, but it was especially valuable in an embassy to an Oriental court, where so much turns upon the impression made upon the individual mind of the monarch.

It is unnecessary to follow Roe through the various stages

of his tedious and largely uneventful voyage to Surat. Suffice it to say that he went out to India in the best equipped English fleet that had up to that time sailed to the East. On his arrival at Surat towards the close of 1615 he almost at once came into collision with the new native government. Zulfikar Khan was domineering and insolent, and put all sorts of obstacles in the way of Roe's mission. Roe, with a complete appreciation of the native character, took up a strong position from the first, put forward his requests as demands and generally showed that he did not intend to permit any barriers to be imposed either to his own mission or to the trading operations of the ships. Zulfikar Khan, when he found the kind of man with whom he had to deal gave in and he ended by making a humble appeal for Roe's friendship, offering on his own part to give the ambassador "anything he would demand." Eventually a safe conduct was forthcoming from Jehangir, and Roe, after a month's detention, set out for Ajmere, where the Court at that time was situated. On the road the ambassador was stricken with fever, and the last stages of the journey from Burhanpur were made under great physical disability. It was not until January 10, 1616, some days after his arrival, that Roe was able to have an audience of the Emperor.

Roe gives an animated account in his diary of the manner of his reception. On arrival at the outer court of the palace he was conducted by the kotwal, or chief police officer, to an inner court, where, "high in a gallery, with a canopy over him and a carpet before him, sat in great and barbarous state the Great Mogul." Proceeding towards him through a lane of people Roe was met by an official, who told him that he must touch the ground with his head

and with his hat off. The ambassador proudly replied that he came in honour to see the prince and was free from the custom of servants.

"So," proceeds Roe, "I passed on until I came to a place railed in right under him with an ascent of three steps where I made him reverence and he bowed his body; and so went within it. I demanded a chair, but was answered no man ever sat in that place, but I was desired as a courtesy to ease myself against a pillar covered with silver that held up his canopy. Then I moved for his favour for an English factory to be resident in the town, which he willingly granted and gave order for the drawing up of the *firman*." Thereafter Roe submitted his presents. Amongst them was a commodious coach and harness for four horses with an "able coachman" to manage the whole.

The inner lining of the coach was crimson China velvet, which at once caught Jehangir's sharp eyes. Why, he demanded of Roe, had the Company taken the trouble to send to China for material wherewith to furnish the coach when, as he had been informed, "the English King had much better velvet near home for such or any other uses?"

Roe's reply is not given, but we may take it that the blunder was not repeated, more especially as Jehangir afterwards had the China velvet removed and another fabric substituted. This was done when, on his order, the English coach was taken to pieces in order that his workmen might make an exact copy from it. The imitation of the original coach was so good that without close examination it was not possible to distinguish it from the presentation coach.

Jehangir appears to have taken to Roe from the outset.

With Oriental perspicuity he no doubt recognized in the ambassador a very different type of man from the sailors and merchants with whom he had previously had to deal where English interests were concerned. He was courteous in his demeanour, made sympathetic inquiries about Roe's health, spoke kindly of his mission and generally showed a genuine interest in the newcomer to his Court. Roe was delighted with his reception, which he describes enthusiastically in his diary as the most gracious ever extended to any ambassador at the Mogul's Court.

It was not long before Roe discovered that the Emperor's favour, though of value as an incentive to him personally, was not to help him far along the road on which he desired to travel. There were pitfalls for him on every side which had to be discovered and negotiated before he could even begin to make progress. The most serious difficulty to be overcome was the anti-English spirit of Prince Khurrum, who was the more powerful as he was in intimate alliance with Asaf Khan, the prime minister and brother of Noor Mahal, Jehangir's favourite queen.

Asaf Khan played the prince's game with the adroitness of an Oriental skilled in the practice of intrigue. To Roe's request for a treaty he replied with a suggestion that the terms of the proposed instrument should be submitted in writing. Roe gladly drew up in outline an excellent treaty providing for free access for the English to all ports belonging to the Great Mogul, including those of Bengal and Sind and the free passage of English goods without the payment of any dues beyond the usual customs. Asaf Khan appeared, on the whole, to approve of the draft, but raised objections to minor points. After-

wards, meeting the ambassador at the durbar, he informed him that the document was ready for sealing. Roe was naturally elated at this prompt consideration of his request. But his spirits fell as day succeeded day and no treaty was forthcoming.

The wheels of diplomacy now began to creak badly. The trouble was that the necessary lubrication in the shape of presents was lacking. Roe's stock, at no time an extensive one, had by this time given out, and he had to rely purely upon his persuasive qualities to push his suit. At the Mogul Court there was never much to be accomplished on these lines, and unfortunately for Roe the period of scarcity of material resources coincided with the outbreak of a fresh crop of difficulties at Surat arising out of the arbitrary action of the local authorities. The complaints made by the ambassador in this connection added fuel to the flames of Prince Khurrum's resentment at the intrusion of the English and the earlier attitude of contemptuous aloofness gave place to a definitely hostile line of conduct. Roe received a message from Asaf Khan to the effect that on the complaint of the prince against him the Emperor had forbidden him to visit the Court. Simultaneously, a hint was conveyed that some of the prince's turbulent following might take revenge for his open opposition to their chief. The ambassador treated the veiled threat with scorn and to the prime minister he replied defiantly that "he would not give away the Company's money for good looks: the world was wide enough. Wee gott noe soe much by this trade as wee would buy it with soe much injury." He concluded by intimating that he would wait a little time longer and that if the treaty were not forthcoming he would depart, and he and

his nation would go elsewhere where they would receive better entertainment.

It is probable that the Mogul officials were as little moved by Roe's threats as he was by theirs. Some of them were ready to welcome the English trade, but the predominating party would gladly have seen the backs of the ambassador and his entourage. Strangely enough Makarrab Khan was one of those who wished the English to remain. His desire, it may be surmised, was prompted more by rivalry with Zulfikar Khan than a feeling of friendship for Roe. But that, for the time being at all events, it was sincere he proved by extricating the ambassador from the awkward impasse into which he had been thrust. He accomplished this by the simple expedient of telling Jehangir why the Englishman no longer attended his durbar. The Emperor professed surprise and allowed it to be understood that he would welcome Roe if he put in an appearance. The ambassador consequently resumed his attendance at Court as if nothing had happened. Negotiations were subsequently resumed, with little result as far as the treaty was concerned, but Roe achieved a distinct success by securing the redress of the Surat grievances in the face of the determined opposition of Prince Khurrum.

Roe's position at Court was now higher than ever. Jehangir made much of him, conversed with him freely on all sorts of subjects, and even deigned to exercise a rather ready gift of badinage upon him. One day he was sent for to the durbar to answer a question about a picture which he had presented to the Emperor with the declaration that he was confident that no man in India could equal it.

Jehangir, on his appearance, demanded of him what he would give a painter who had made a copy so like it that he would not be able to distinguish the original from it.

Roe replied, "A painter's reward—fifty rupees."

The Emperor answered that his painter "was a caveleer and that the sum offered was too small a gift," to which Roe responded that he "gave his picture with a good heart, esteeming it rare and meant not to make comparisons or wagers, but that if his Majesty's servant had done as well and would not accept his gift his Majesty was most fit to reward him." Jehangir laughed at the neat retort.

"So with many passages of jests, mirth and bragges concerning the arts of his country" the Emperor fell to asking Roe questions.

How often did he drink in the day, and how much? What was beer and how was it made, and whether Roe could make it in India?

All these questions were answered to the Emperor's satisfaction, and then Roe was dismissed. But he was summoned again later for the picture test, for which Jehangir had made somewhat elaborate arrangements.

The ambassador was shown six pictures on a table—the presented work and five copies—and he was asked to pick out the former. As the light was not good he was for a brief space at a loss to discover the original, but at last he indicated it, pointing out at the same time the differences which distinguished it from its fellows.

The Emperor was hugely delighted at Roe's indecision in making his choice—"he was very merry and joyfull and craked like a Northern man." The audience closed by Jehangir presenting one of the copies to Roe and him-

self wrapping it up in paper to preserve it from injury in transit. As he handed the gift over he observed—

"You see we are not so unskilfull as you esteem us."

On another occasion Jehangir sent an urgent message summoning Roe to his presence. The ambassador, who had retired for the night, dressed and repaired to the palace, to find that Jehangir wished to satisfy his curiosity in regard to a miniature which the ambassador had incautiously shown to one of the imperial artists. It is not stated in Roe's journal who the picture represented, but the probability is that it was a portrait of the lady to whom he had been wedded prior to his embarkation. Roe, on repairing to the palace, found the Emperor "sitting cross-legged on a little throne, all clad in diamonds, pearls and rubies, before him a table of gold on which were about fifty pieces of gold plate, set all with stones, some very great and extremely rich, some of less value, but all of them almost covered with small stones." About him were his nobility "in their best equipage, whom he commanded to drink froliquely several wines standing by in great flagons."

Immediately the ambassador entered Jehangir asked for the miniature. Roe showed him two pictures, probably hoping that the one he cherished most might be overlooked; but the Emperor pounced upon it and asked whose portrait it was. Roe replied that it represented a friend of his who was dead. Would he part with it? Jehangir demanded. The ambassador answered diplomatically that he valued it more than anything he possessed because it was the image of one that he loved dearly and he could never replace it, but that if his Majesty would pardon him his fancy he would give it him. Jehangir

ultimately said that he would not rob Roe of his treasure, but would simply borrow it to show to his ladies and in order to get his artists to make five copies from it for their satisfaction. On these terms Roe parted with the miniature, and as far as can be gathered from his diary he never saw it again.

The business of the miniature settled Jehangir insisted on his visitor joining in the festivity, which he said was in honour of his birthday. He was induced to quaff from a gold cup which was handed to him a draught of "mingled wine, half of the grape, half artificial." The liquor was potent and made Roe sneeze, "whereat he (the Emperor) laughed and called for raisins and almonds and sliced lemons, which were brought him on a plate of gold, and he bade me eat and drink what I would and no more." The cup was presented as a souvenir of the occasion, and Roe made acknowledgment of it in his own manner, ignoring a suggestion of Asaf Khan that he should kneel and knock his head on the ground in token of his gratitude, in harmony with the fashion of the Court. After this Jehangir "made frolic" and presumably in his cups sent Roe word that he esteemed him "more than any Frank." Then attendants appeared bringing in trays filled with imitation almonds of gold and silver which the Emperor cast amongst his courtiers in handfuls. The nobles scrambled for them like boys at a school treat, but the dignified Roe refrained, "for," he says, "I saw his son took up none." The drinking continued until Jehangir could no longer hold up his head. When this interesting stage in the proceedings was reached Roe, with the rest who were capable, took his departure.

Concerning these drinking bouts of Jehangir Roe says

that "though drunkenness is a common and glorious vice and an exercise of the King's, yet it is so strictly forbidden that no man can enter into the place where the King sits but the porters smell his breath and if he have but tasted wine is not suffered to come in, and if the reason be known of his absence he shall with difficulty escape the whip." The story is related of an unfortunate noble who in an unguarded moment in open durbar made an oblique reference to the previous night's wassail and, for his indiscretion, was almost beaten to death with the terrible whips described by Hawkins.

Cruelty, now as in Hawkins' time, was a conspicuous feature of the Emperor's character. One day Roe and his associates were horrified at the awful cries of a woman of the harem who, for some indiscretion, had been condemned to be buried up to the neck and left to die by exposure to the fierce rays of the sun. For one whole day and a part of another the wretched creature's heart-piercing appeals for mercy were heard by the Englishmen in their lodgings, which were in the vicinity of the scene of the terrible tragedy. They, of course, dare not interfere in the least degree, as to have done so would probably have been to seal their own doom as well as that of the victim of Jehangir's wrath.

In some respects, as Hawkins had noted, the Mogul government showed considerable enlightenment. One feature of the system which to-day would be regarded as counting to some extent for administrative righteousness is, curiously enough, cited by Roe as an example of imperial waywardness. It was the practice invariably followed at that period of publishing accounts of the discussions in durbar upon public questions with the decisions

following upon them. These official records must have been a sort of Oriental Hansard and quite harmless, if not useful, but Roe, whose notions were drawn from the era of England's history when the reporting of the proceedings of Parliament was a high crime and misdemeanour, was shocked at the idea that the report of the day's durbar discussions could be purchased for two shillings, and that "the common base people" should "know as much as the Council of the newes of the day," with the result that "the King's new resolutions were tossed and censured by every rascall."

All the time that Roe was thus basking in the sun of imperial favour the question of the treaty was progressing but slowly. Asaf Khan, while making a pretence of examining the questions at issue, took good care that nothing should be done to give the foreigner a foothold in the country. His attitude was not entirely the outcome of self interest or even of prejudice. The treaty for which Roe asked was an instrument at that time not only quite unfamiliar to the Mogul government, but in direct opposition to its traditions. The theory upon which its despotic power was built was that the Emperor was so superior a being that he could not be bound by engagements of a permanent character. What he felt at liberty to give he must be free to take away if it pleased him so to do.

Viewed from this standpoint the constant changes of policy of which the English in the early days of their appearance in India were the victims become intelligible. The Mogul's apparent vacillation was not the mere working of an unstable mind, but the outcome of a policy deliberately and consistently applied as an essential part of the state system.

Roe, who knew nothing of this, kept steadily pressing his suit in the hope that by his persistency, aided by the indispensable presents, he might some day carry his point. In deference to the wishes of the directors he even pushed his demands beyond the original point by preferring an application for a safe port with permission to fortify it. As he had half anticipated the proposal met with no favour. Prince Khurrum treated it with scorn, observing that his father "needed not English assistance: he meant not to undertake war with Portugall for their sakes and he would not on any consideration deliver up any port to the Company." Later, when Roe broached the subject to Asaf Khan, the minister declined even to submit the project to the Emperor. In his view it was sheer impertinence to raise the question.

By this time Roe had had a sufficiently long experience of India to obtain a good general view of the position. In a letter home at this juncture he put before the directors his opinions as to what should be their future line of policy. He did not favour the appointment of a permanent representative at the Mogul's Court. "I would sooner dye," he wrote, "than be subject to the slavery the Persian (ambassador) is content with. A meaner agent would among these proud Moores better effect your business . . . I have moderated it according to my discretion, but with a swollen heart." He went on to suggest that a native agent should be employed at the Mogul capital with a subordinate at Surat. As to general policy he was very emphatic in the view that the Company should not allow itself to be entangled with engagements on land. "A war and traffique," he wrote, "are incompatible. By my consent you shall no way engage yourselves but at

sea, wher you are like to gayne as often as to loose. It is the beggering of the Portugall, notwithstanding his many rich residences and territoryes that hee keepes souldiers that spendes it: yet his garrisons are meane. Hee never profited by the Indyes since hee defended them. Observe this well. It hath also been the errour of the Dutch, who seeke plantation here by the sword. They turne a wonderful stocke, they proule in all places; they possess some of the best; yet ther dead Payes consume all the gayne. Lett this be received as a rule that if you will profitt seek it at sea and in quiett trade for . . . it is an errour to affect garrisons and land warrs in India." It was advice which was strangely belied by the subsequent course of events in India, but at the time at which it was written it was the soundest counsel that could have been given.

CHAPTER X

An Imperial Despot in Dress and Undress

Jehangir moves his Court—The splendours of the imperial camp—Jehangir and the fakir—The Court established at Mandu—Roe at Mandu—His ill health—Jehangir intercepts and appropriates the presents from England—Roe and the Emperor—An amusing audience—Jehangir and the English mastiffs—A curious ceremony—Prince Khurrum returns in triumph from the war—Roe and the prince—Roe forms an alliance with Asaf Khan and Noor Mahal—Asaf Khan espouses the English cause in durbar—Roe's victory

TOWARDS the close of 1616 there was much stir and excitement in Ajmere. The word had gone round that the Great Mogul was going on one of those imperial progresses for which Jehangir, like his illustrious father, had such a partiality. The picturesque Rajpoot city was moved to its depths by an edict which meant so much for every single individual in the population, for when the Emperor moved he took his capital with him with all the numerous adjuncts which go to make up the entourage of a great Oriental court. In Roe's diary we have an animated sketch of the doings of that time, more especially as they affected the central figure in the wonderful pageant. There is first a picture of Jehangir being prepared by his attendants for the journey. One man brings on a dish "a mighty carp" set in white stuff into which the Emperor thrusts his finger and with the material marks his forehead —"the ceremony presaging good fortune." Another

comes with his buckler and sword, the former "set all over with great diamonds and rubies" and the latter being fixed to a belt of gold similarly embellished with precious stones. A third tenders a quiver with thirty arrows and his bow in a case. On the Mogul's head was set "a red turban with a plume of horse tops, not many but long; on one side of the turban was a ruby unset as big as a walnut, on the other side a diamond as great; in the middle an emerald like a heart, much bigger. His sash was wreathed with a chain of great pearls, rubies and diamonds drilled. About his neck he carried a chain of gold . . . as great as I ever saw. On his elbows were armlets set with diamonds and on his wrists were three great rows of diamonds of several sorts. His hands bore on almost every finger a ring. . . . On his feet were a pair of embroidered buskins (adorned) with pearls, the toes sharp and turning up." On each side of the Emperor were two eunuchs, carrying small gold maces, and equipped also with a long bunch of white horse hair to drive away the flies from the imperial face. Before the Mogul "went drums, ill trumpets and loud music and many canopies with strange ensignes of majesty of cloth of gold set in many places with great rubies."

Jehangir took his seat in the first of two coaches which were drawn up outside the entrance to the imperial apartments. The vehicle was the one which had been made by his order in imitation of the coach forwarded by the Company a year previously and upon the box was the English coachman, "clothed as rich as any player and more gaudy," sitting up in all the dignified majesty of his class. The second coach, the presentation one, was allotted to Noor Mahal, and into it that imperious lady stepped, with

due precautions no doubt against her features being seen by the handsome Frank who was exchanging salutations with the Emperor. Not, however, that the ladies of the palace were at all reluctant to display their charms, for on an earlier occasion Roe notes that when he was having audience of Jehangir genuine curiosity prompted some whom he understood to be the Emperor's principal wives to break holes in the reed screen which hung before their box in order to gaze at him. The holes apparently were so large that he was able "to discern the full proportion" of the ladies. "They were," he states, "indifferently white with black hair smooth up (the forehead)," and if there had been no other light to enable him to distinguish their features the diamonds they wore would have sufficed to show them. "When I looked up," he adds, "they retired, and were so merry that I suppose they laughed at me." On the occasion of Jehangir's progress the ladies, apart from Noor Mahal, were not immediately in evidence. They "were carried like paraketoes" in cages half a mile behind their lord and master.

The splendours of the *lescar*, or imperial camp, are described in vivid language by Roe. As if by a magician's wand a vast canvas city had been called into being. The circuit of the whole was little less than twenty English miles, and within its limits were miles of streets with all sorts of shops "distinguished so by rule that every man knows readily where to seek his wants." There were special quarters allotted to "men of quality," and every trader knew exactly how far from the King's tent he might pitch, the amount of ground he might utilize and the special site which he could occupy. No man, however exalted in rank, was permitted to take up ground nearer

than the distance covered by a musket shot from the imperial tents. These were stately canvas structures "half a mile in compass in the forme of a fort, with divers coynes and bulwarkes with high cannats of a coarse stuff, made like arras, red on the outside within which were figures in panes, with a handsome gatehouse." In the midst of the imperial enclosure stood "a throne of mother of pearl borne on two pillars raised on earth, covered over with a high tent, the pole headed with a knob of gold, under it canopies of cloth of gold, underfoot carpets." Within the enclosure were about thirty divisions of tents. "Those of the noblemen were in excellent forms, some of white, some green, some mingled, all encompassed, as orderly as any house." "One of the greatest rarities and magnificences I ever saw. The whole vale showed like a beautiful city," comments Roe; and then as if overwhelmed with his own insignificance he adds, "I was unfitted with carriage and ashamed of my position. . . . So I returned to my poor house."

Many interesting details are given by Roe of the life in the imperial camp. The Emperor spent his evenings in hunting or hawking on tanks by means of boats which were removed from place to place on carts specially designed to carry them. After these expeditions the state business was transacted—that is, when Jehangir was in a condition to deal with it, but it often happened that he was prevented "by drowsiness from the fumes of Bacchus." Sometimes his alcoholic indulgence made him argumentative.

On one such occasion, Roe records, the Emperor "fell to disputing of the laws of Moses, Jesus and Mohammed, and was so kind he turned to me and said—

"'I am a King; you shall be welcome—Christians, Moors, Jews—all shall be welcome.' He medled not with faith. They came all in love, and he would protect them from wrong. They lived in his safety and none should oppress them.

"And this often repeated, but in extreme drunkenness: he fell to weeping and to divers passions and so kept us till midnight."

Jehangir, besides being a debauchee, was, there can be no doubt, a *poseur*. He seems to have deliberately set out to impress Roe by displays of amiable personal qualities. In the drunken fit just described the idea clearly was to create a tradition of his magnanimity and toleration. Some days later Roe was given a highly theatrical demonstration of his humility.

Entering the royal presence Roe found Jehangir sitting on his throne and a beggar at his feet—"a poore silly old man, all asht, ragd and patcht, with a young roague attending on him." This *gosain*, or fakir, for such no doubt he was, presented the Emperor with a cake, cooked on ashes, made of coarse grain, "which the King accepted most willingly, and breaking one bit ate it, which a dainty mouth could scarce have done." Afterwards Jehangir's meal was brought in and "whatsoever he took to eat he brake and gave the beggar half, after many strange humiliations and charities, rising the old wretch up, he being unable, he took him up in his arms which no cleanly body durst have touched. Embracing him and three times laying his hand on his heart, calling him father, he left him and all us, and me, in admiration of such a virtue in a heathen prince."

Roe seems to have conceived a real regard for the Em-

peror. He describes him about this time as "of countenance cheerful, and not proud in nature, but by habit and custom: for at night he is very affable and full of gentle conversation." On his part, Jehangir was not less drawn to the ambassador, whose manly yet courtly bearing and frank independence stood out in pleasant relief in a world in which dissimulation and abject abasement were everywhere conspicuous. When Roe fell ill, as he did in the course of the progress, the Emperor showed the most kindly feeling. He caused frequent inquiries to be made as to his condition and one day sent him from the imperial store five bottles of wine, and what was more remarkable, "a fat hog," procured from Goa, which was dispatched with a message to the effect that since it had been in the imperial charge it had been fed on nothing but sugar and butter.

At the outset of the progress the Emperor's ultimate destination was kept a profound secret. It was thought at first that Agra was the objective, and the route taken lent colour to this supposition, but when a certain point on the road was reached a more southerly course was followed, which indicated that Jehangir was [making] for Mandu, the old capital of the Mohammedan kingdom of Malwa, situated in what is now the Dhar State, one of the petty principalities of Central India.

Jehangir's object in proceeding to this isolated and, from the standpoint of his Court, inconvenient spot, was to be in a position to lend support to a campaign which his son, Prince Khurrum, was conducting against the King of the Deccan. This prince had for years previously been struggling to throw off the Mogul overlordship and had successfully resisted a force which Jehangir had sent against him

under the leadership of Sultan Purwaz, one of his elder sons. Prince Khurrum's expedition derived all the importance which attaches to an effort to retrieve a failure, and Jehangir was determined that it should have the fullest advantage that could be derived from his presence in a commanding position directly overlooking the theatre of war. His courtiers were probably far from sharing his zeal for the maintenance of the imperial prestige. The route lay through a wild and inhospitable region, in which supplies were difficult to obtain, and the absence of anything in the nature of roads made the transport of the immense force included in the imperial camp a matter of the utmost difficulty. Mandu itself was little more than a heap of ruins. Its highest recommendation was that it was a strong position, but its fortifications, however useful they might be for the purposes of a post of observation such as Jehangir contemplated, offered no suitable shelter for the great train of nobles and Court functionaries, to say nothing of the horde of camp followers who ministered to the multifarious needs of the imperial camp.

Roe was so fortunate as to be able to establish himself in a deserted mosque which he found on the outskirts of the ruined city. As there was in close proximity to this a stream of pure water, he was fairly comfortable, but the hardships of the journey had told upon his constitution, and he was laid low for some time after his arrival with an attack of fever. It was for him a time of great depression. "Death and I have been house fellows," he wrote to a friend at home at this period, and somewhat later he stated that he was "full of India, even to fastidiousness." His ill-health was aggravated, there can be no doubt, by the disappointments which he had sustained in the prosecu-

tion of his mission. He seemed further than ever from success. The negotiations which had once offered so fair a prospect had come to nothing, and there was no immediate likelihood of their being resumed. The good will of the Emperor was, it is true, an asset, but the problem of how to turn it to account was as baffling as ever it had been.

At this juncture the weary current of Roe's life was sharply broken in upon by an incident which caused him momentarily great mortification. In the closing months of 1616 a fleet arrived at Surat from England bearing with it a batch of new presents for the Emperor. After some delay they were despatched to Mandu in the charge of the Rev. Edward Terry, who had been sent out to act as chaplain to Roe. Jehangir, who was always well posted as to the movements of foreign ships, caused the presents to be intercepted before they reached the ambassador, and coolly annexed them. Roe was fired with indignation at so gross an insult, as he conceived it. His anger was the deeper because in order to avoid oppressive dues there had been sent up with the presents sundry silks and velvets which were designed for sale in the ordinary way by the Company's representatives. It would now be necessary for him to explain the ruse in order to obtain possession of the goods.

Roe appears to have lost no time in submitting a protest against the interception of the presents. The account of his audience with Jehangir on the subject is most amusing reading.

Jehangir, in reply to the remonstrance, told Roe that he "should not be sad or grieved that he had his choice, for that he had no patience to forbear seeing the presents." He did Roe no wrong and as for the King of England he

would make him satisfaction. The prince (Khurrum), Noor Mahal, and he, he added, were all one, and as for bringing him anything to procure his favour, it was a ceremony and unnecessary, for he would at all times hear Roe: he would be welcome empty-handed, for his poverty would not be his fault. He concluded by saying that Roe should not be angry as he meant well.

During the imperial harangue Roe maintained a stolid silence that was more eloquent than words. As he continued silent, Jehangir directly asked him whether he was pleased or not.

Thus challenged, Roe diplomatically replied that his Majesty's content pleased him. At this juncture, seeing Terry, who had accompanied Roe, Jehangir called to him—

"Padre, you are very welcome, and this house is yours and esteeme it so: whensoever you desire to come to me it shall be free to you and whatsoever you require of me I will grant you."

After this digression, Jehangir turned again to the question of the presents and adroitly extracted an assent from Roe to his act of misappropriation by enumerating each article and asking whether he would wish to have it back.

First there were the dogs, the cushions and the barber's case, he (the Emperor) was delighted with them. They need not be returned?

Roe, of course, could only answer, "No."

Then, continued the Emperor, there were two clothes chests, "very mean and ordinary," for whom were they? He was told that one was intended for himself and the other for Noor Mahal.

"Why then," said he, "you will not ask for that I have, being contented with one."

"I was forced to yield," writes Roe.

Next Jehangir demanded to know who the hats were for; his women liked them, he added.

Roe answered that three were sent to his Majesty and the fourth was his (Roe's) own to wear.

"Ah," said Jehangir, "then you will not take them from me, for I like them, and yours I will return if you need it and will not bestow it on me."

What could Roe do but put a smiling face upon the loss of his hat?

A picture representing Venus and a satyr provided material for more dangerous controversy. From what Roe says it seems that Jehangir suspected that the allegory of the picture was directed against Asiatics, the satyr, with its dark-coloured complexion, being a repulsive embodiment of the race, while the fair Venus was presumably the spirit of the West, shown leading the ogre of the East in bondage.

"What was the meaning of the picture?" he asked.

Neither Roe nor Terry could satisfy him on the point. Nevertheless, he annexed the picture with the rest.

Anon he turned his attention to "some carved animal figures, very ridiculous and ill-shaped ordinary figures, the varnish off and no beauty."

What were they sent for?

"I was really ashamed," wrote Roe, "and answered it was not my fault; those that seized them must bear the brunt; but that they were not intended for him, but sent to show the forms of beasts with us."

Jehangir replied quickly—

"Did you think in England that a horse and bull were strange to me?"

Roe replied that he thought not of so mean a matter, and what was in the sender's mind he could not say.

"Well," said the King, "I will keep them and only desire you to help me to a horse of the greatest size: it is all I will expect, and a male and female of mastiffs, and the tall Irish greyhounds and such other dogs as hunt in your land, and if you will promise me these I will give you the word of a King, I will fully recompense you and grant all your desires."

Roe answered that he would promise to procure the animals, but that he could not guarantee their lives.

Upon this Jehangir "gave extraordinary bows, lay'd his hand on his heart and such kinds of gestures as all men will witness he never used to any man, nor such familiarity, nor such freedom, nor profession of love."

Roe altogether was royally cozened, and that he had some suspicion of the fact is shown by the statement which follows the complacent sentences quoted: "This was all my recompense, though he often desired me to be merry, (saying) that what wrong he had done me he would royally requite and send me home to my country with grace and reward like a gentleman."

Of all the presents that he received from England, Jehangir probably most valued the mastiffs. The fighting qualities of these splendid animals appealed to the sporting instincts which were strong in him, and he doubtless appreciated them the more as they contrasted so strikingly with the cowardly disposition of the Indian dog. The two which were sent to Jehangir were the survivors of eight originally shipped. They were despatched up country in little coaches, and on arrival at Mandu were placed each in charge of four attendants. Two of the quartette carried

the dog in a palankeen, to which it was chained, while the other two were told off to keep the flies from the animal with a whisk. In this lordly fashion the canine representatives of Old England upheld the dignity of a noble line; and even the great Jehangir did not consider it beneath him to feed them with his own hands, using for the purpose a pair of silver tongs which had been specially made for that purpose.

It was during his sojourn at Mandu that Roe first had the opportunity of witnessing the curious ceremony of weighing the Emperor against gold and other precious materials, which was a characteristic part of the celebration of the Mogul's birthday. On the previous occasion an invitation to attend had missed him, owing to the stupidity of the messenger, but in this instance Jehangir took especial pains to see that the English ambassador was present. Roe found the spectacle as picturesque as imagination could paint it. He saw the Emperor, glittering from head to foot with diamonds and other precious stones used to embellish his person, step into the golden scales, to be weighed six times, first against gold, next against silver and so on. When the last weighing was finished Jehangir ascended his throne and distributed silver almonds, nuts and spices, after the manner previously described. Once more the great men "scrambled prostrate upon their bellies" for the imperial largesse; once more Roe's dignity forbade him to follow their example. The Emperor, seeing that the ambassador did not join in the scrimmage, took a basin and poured the contents into Roe's cloak. Some of the nobles, observing what was happening, held out their hands to intercept the bounteous stream and they would have diverted a good part of it had not Roe

protested. At night there was the usual wassail, which Roe was told he must attend, but remembering that their "waters are fire," he stayed at home on the plea of ill-health.

In less than a month from this celebration Prince Khurrum returned in triumph from his campaign in the Deccan. It is a curious example of the irony of history that his father heaped upon him on this occasion the most profuse honours, conferring upon him the title of Shah Jehan (Lord of the World), making him a Mansabdar, with the command of 20,000 horsemen, and yielding to him the right to sit on a chair next to the throne—and all this in that same Mandu in which Jehangir, after deposition by the son he now honoured, was to pass the last days of his life a prisoner.

Khurrum bore his new honours with the arrogance of a proud nature, and a less skilful student of human nature than Roe would have paid assiduous court to him. But the ambassador knew from his experience of Orientals that the very worst course he could pursue would be to pander to the great man. The line he took towards him was, if anything, a trifle more independent than that he had followed in the days when the prince's star was by no means in the ascendant. In accordance with established etiquette he rode to the Prince's tent a few days after the triumphal entry to tender his congratulations.

The prince sent out word to him that he must either attend the next morning, when he sat in durbar, or stay until his riding to Court, a course which would have entailed the necessity of Roe hanging about the door of the tent for a considerable time.

"This," writes Roe, "I took in extreme scorn, his father

never denying me access; and his pride is such as may teach Lucifer; which made me answer roundly I was not his slave, but a free ambassador of a king, and that I would never more visit him or attend him. He had refused me justice, but at night I would see him with the King, to whom only I would address myself, and so departed."

Bold words these even for an ambassador to utter to a man of Prince Khurrum's status, especially in his hour of favour. But Roe at the time had in reserve a weapon which he knew he could use with telling effect in any subsequent phase of the dispute. He had heard the previous day of the arrival at Swally of a new fleet, bringing with it, of course, a fresh batch of presents. Jehangir's almost childish craving for novelties might be relied on, he no doubt thought, to smooth matters for him in the prince's direction.

Not, we may imagine, without a twinkle of triumph in his eye, Roe attended the imperial durbar that evening. As he passed the prince he saluted him respectfully, but Khurrum treated him with disdainful indifference. Then turning to the Emperor, Roe told him of the fleet's arrival and asked his commands in regard to the presents. All eagerness at the news, Jehangir demanded what had been brought. He was given a list of the articles, and was so pleased, especially with some arras which had been imported for him, that he promised Roe all favours and privileges that he might desire. The coup was so far successful, but Roe did not intend to trust over-much to his imperial patron's sense of honour. For the time being he determined to have the presents kept in safe custody at Surat, the only exception being some rather remarkable pearls—one being "shaped like a pear, very large, beautiful and orient,"—

which he gave orders should be transmitted by special messenger.

The jewels thus withdrawn from the ordinary stock of presents Roe knew would supply powerful leverage for the execution of his designs. But he probably little suspected at the outset how valuable they would prove. At the period, Asaf Khan and Noor Mahal had fallen out with Khurrum, chiefly owing to the latter's refusal to wed the Empress's daughter by her first husband. This was a match upon which the ambitious Noor Mahal had set her heart, mainly because she hoped by its means to continue in a new reign, if one were entered upon, the extraordinary influence she had wielded in Jehangir's time. Prince Khurrum's uncompromising attitude on the subject, dictated by his love for Mumtaz Mahal, a devotion which inspired the construction of the glorious Taj, had convinced the exalted intriguers that it would be folly to base their hopes on the Prince. They realized that they must make other plans, and they had already fixed on Prince Shariyar, a younger son of Jehangir, as a suitable subject for the promotion of their designs, when Prince Khurrum's return from the war with an enormously increased prestige added a fresh incentive to their scheme of aggrandisement at the latter's expense.

Roe was too well posted in the affairs of the Court not to be aware of the direction in which the palace intrigues were being promoted. Possessing such knowledge he sagaciously concluded that the situation might be turned to account by his association with Asaf Khan and Noor Mahal.

Without loss of time he sought an interview with the former, and under a pledge of secrecy revealed to him the

fact that the ships had brought a beautiful pearl which he alleged he was anxious to sell, either to the Emperor or to the prince.

Asaf Khan swallowed the bait tendered with avidity. He told Roe that he must on no account allow either Jehangir or the prince to have the jewel. The Emperor, if he were told about it, would not rest until he got it into his hand, and once it was in his possession Roe would have to sue for it. The prince was tyrannical and opposed to all nationalities. Why not let *him* have the pearl? If it were put in his possession, he insinuated, he would reconcile Roe to the prince and do great things for the English.

Roe showed a yielding disposition, but raised doubts as to the possibility of the transaction leaking out. Whereupon Asaf Khan gave his oath, and this was followed by "a ceremony of covenant by crossing of thumbs." Finally the conspirators embraced in token of their bond of friendship.

The minister proved as good as his word. He took Roe to Prince Khurrum and "persuaded him to alter his course towards us, telling him he gained yearly by us a lakh of rupees at his port (Surat), that the trade was on the increase, and that if it were interfered with great inconvenience would ensue." Finally, Asaf Khan "moved him for a *firman* for our present case, and obtained it, promising all manner of content." Afterwards the minister added to the great service he had rendered by writing to the government of Surat on behalf of the Company's representatives.

Noor Mahal ably seconded her brother in his support of English interests. In exchange for a promise of priority in the selection of foreign novelties brought by the English ships, she took the cargoes under her special protection,

with the consequence that the irritating exactions of local officials were effectually suppressed.

Under the buoyant influence of his diplomatic success, Roe's spirits rose. No longer was he a humble suppliant for favours which were never forthcoming. As he wrote to the Company's officials at Surat, " Noor Mahal is my solicitor and her brother my broker."

Asaf Khan was dissatisfied with the pearls—or professed to be so—when they arrived in the custody of Richard Steele early in November, by which time the Emperor was once more on the march. But he kept nobly to his bargain to the extent even of openly in durbar championing the English cause in opposition to the antagonistic views forcibly expressed by Prince Khurrum.

This strange incident, which may be said to have set the seal on the establishment of the English power at Surat, is described by Roe with evident relish in his diary. Roe had attended the durbar to present a letter from James I which had arrived with the latest fleet. In the course of the ceremony of presentation Khurrum entered into an argument with his father as to the value of the English trade, complaining that he had no profit by it and would be well content to be rid of the Company's establishment. Asaf Khan, perceiving the drift of the discussion, " took a turn and roundly told the king that we brought both profit to the port and to the kingdom, and security; that we were used very rudely by the prince's servants, and that it was not possible for us to rest without amends; that it were more honourable to his Majesty to license us to depart than to intreat us so discourteously, for it would be the end." The prince made a passionate reply, asserting that he had never done the English any wrong. But he could make no

headway against Asaf Khan's advocacy, and in the end Jehangir administered a sharp reproof to his son and directed him to allow the presents to be sent up to Roe without being touched and also to give the ambassador such privileges as were fit.

The victory was so complete that Roe was content to seek a little relaxation at Ahmedabad, where an English factory had been established, while Jehangir pushed forward into Cambay to obtain his first glimpse of the ocean. Simultaneously with the ambassador's progress westward an agent of Noor Mahal was speeding to Surat to take advantage of the arrangement come to about the selection of novelties. Roe thought the enterprising lady's haste strange, but he forwarded instructions that her envoy should have every consideration on the ground that the opportunity, if discreetly used, might turn out to the Company's advantage.

CHAPTER XI

A Group of English Adventurers in India

Robert Trully, the cornet player—William Hemsell, the Great Mogul's coachman—Richard Steele—His Agra waterworks scheme—Thomas Coryat, "the Odcombe Leg Stretcher"—Coryat's early career at the Court of James I—*Coryat's Crudities*—Coryat's journey overland to India—Coryat's audience with Jehangir—The Emperor and a Christian convert—Coryat prepares to return home—He dies and is buried at Surat—Roe's last days in India—He secures an agreement from the Mogul government permitting the English to trade—He returns to England

FOR the present we may leave Roe resting on his hard-won laurels, and turn to the doings of some of the subsidiary characters who were playing their part in this interlude of what in the end was to prove the great drama of British influence in India.

From time to time in the ambassador's diary and in the correspondence of the period, we come across allusions to men of English birth who strutted and fretted their hour upon the ample stage of Indian life, and then were heard of no more. Some there were who were no credit to their race, who to ingratiate themselves with the native potentates "turned Moors," and disappeared from view under a cloud of infamy. Of this class was Robert Trully, a musician, who was brought out to charm the Mogul by his cornet playing, and who, having acquitted himself of this duty

indifferently well, went off to the Court of the King of the Deccan, where having abjured his faith and undergone circumcision, he was given "great honours," which he enjoyed until the inevitable day of reckoning came, when he fell out of favour. A more honourable type of the humble adventurer was William Hemsell, the English coachman of Jehangir, who found such favour in his imperial master's sight that he was given a handsome income and a position of considerable honour at Court. In the end, the Rev. Edward Terry says, he might have risen "to very great estate, had not death prevented it and that immediately after he was settled in that great service." Belonging to yet another category was Richard Steele, the young official of the Company who took the famous pearls from Surat to Mandu, as related in an earlier part of the narrative.

Steele was a man of ideas, who had been induced to enter upon an Indian career by the expectation that he would find a lucrative market for them in the Mogul's dominions. One of his enterprises was a scheme for the construction of waterworks at Agra. The success of a project undertaken in the City of London at the close of the sixteenth century, by which the Thames' water was conveyed to houses by means of pipes, suggested to Steele's fertile mind that a similar undertaking in the Mogul capital would be profitable. He accordingly elaborated proposals by which the waters of the Jumna would be intercepted and passed through lead pipes to the different parts of the City, to the great saving of labour. It was quite a feasible scheme, as history has proved, but unhappily for Steele, he was born two or three centuries too soon.

Roe, when he heard of the project, dismissed it as im-

practicable, but Steele declined to accept his verdict and intrigued to secure a private audience of the Mogul. Eventually, through the agency of an English artist who had been brought out for Jehangir's service, he was admitted to the interior of the palace. As soon as he had entered the sacred precincts the chief eunuch "put a cloth over his head that he should not see the women," and he missed what would, no doubt, have been an interesting spectacle, though he heard the fair ones as they passed close to him. On another occasion the attendant, in an obliging mood, used a very thin cloth to blind Steele, and he was enabled to obtain a glimpse of the ladies, "there being of them some hundreds." Possessing a knowledge of Persian—the Court language—Steele was able to prosecute his suit independently, but the project did not appeal to Jehangir, and he was given to understand that it would not be entertained. His wife, who had come out as a maid to Mrs. Towerson, was befriended by a great lady who was Jehangir's hostess at Ahmedabad, and through her influence he secured such a strong position that Roe became seriously alarmed for his own prestige. But his fickle Court patrons eventually abandoned him, as they had done others, and he was glad to take passage with Roe when he returned to England in 1619. He did not again set foot in the country, though he was employed for a time under the Company in Java.

Strangest of this band of English adventurers who kept Roe in countenance in his days of exile at the Mogul Court was that amusing, eccentric Thomas Coryat, "the Odcombe leg stretcher," who is famous in English literature as the author of *Coryat's Crudities*, the most whimsical book on Continental travel that was probably ever penned.

Coryat, who was the son of a Rector of Odcombe, in Somerset, in early life gained an unenviable kind of distinction as a sort of buffoon at the Court of James I. Physical peculiarities, a peaked sugar-loaf formation of head perched upon an ungainly frame, were added to mental gifts of the kind which were effective in one who filled the rôle of a wit. Not the least of his attainments was a power of pungent repartee which was exercised at times with deadly effect when some Court favourite ventured to enter into an encounter with him. In 1608 he commenced a prolonged series of wanderings, which took him into every corner of Europe. On his return he brought out his work with the aid of patrons, whose support he secured by "unwearied pertinacity and unblushing importunity." The volume was issued with some mock heroic verses by Ben Jonson, in which the author is treated with solemn ridicule.

Sighing for more worlds to conquer, Coryat in 1612 started again on his travels, this time directing his face towards the East. Having had a preliminary peep at Egypt and the Pyramids, he proceeded to Joppa and from that port tramped through the Holy Land, thence on to Nineveh and Babylon, down the Euphrates valley to Baghdad, thence through Persia to Kandahar, and so to India. He turned up at Agra in 1615, to find an old friend in Roe, who had known him at James's Court. The ambassador, of course, could not do less than befriend the wanderer.

Coryat boasted that he had made his way through Asia at a cost which worked out at no more than twopence per day, and it would seem from his own confessions that the bulk of this modest expenditure was covered by benefac-

tions which he received *en route.* At the Mogul capital he speedily made himself at home. A natural linguist he quickly acquired such proficiency in Hindustani that it is recorded of him that by his generous use of appropriate native expletives he reduced to silence within an hour a native virago who was employed by Roe as washerwoman, and who had given much trouble to the ambassador's household by her extreme volubility.

A more questionable and dangerous use of his knowledge of the native language was made one evening at the time of Mohammedan prayer, when in response to the muezzin's cry, "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet," he shouted in Hindustani that the assertion was a lie, that the true Prophet was Jesus. It says much for the toleration which prevailed at the Mogul capital that the insult was overlooked as the indiscretion of the half-witted "English fakir." Coryat, however, was no fool, as he showed when, having sought and obtained an audience of Jehangir, he launched at him a highly-flattering eulogy in the Persian tongue.

In the flowery periods for which that language is famous, he recalled the episode of the Queen of Sheba and Solomon, and assured him that as the famous Queen had found Solomon greatly to surpass the expectation she had formed of him, so he had discovered in the dazzling glory of the Great Mogul a picture far beyond the range of his utmost imaginings. Jehangir seems to have been pleased with this barefaced flattery and possibly also amused by the spectacle of the quaint Englishman fluently declaiming the flowery Persian sentences. At the close he said some kindly words to Coryat and dismissed him with a gift of a hundred rupees.

The "leg stretcher" had gone off to the palace without communicating his intention to Roe, and the ambassador, when he heard of the incident, was furious. At the earliest moment he told Coryat that he had degraded the credit of his nation by appearing before the Emperor "out of an insinuating humour to crave money of him."

"But," said Coryat, in describing the encounter, "I answered our ambassador in that stout and resolute manner that he ceased nibling at me."

A more crushing blow was dealt the eccentric later when Steele, whom he had met in Persia, told him that on reaching England and informing James I of the meeting the monarch said by way of comment: "Is that old fool still alive?" Coryat was reduced for a time to silence by this "unkindest cut of all" from "the Wisest Fool in Europe," in whom he must have recognized a certain kinship.

In his whimsical fashion Coryat made a study of Jehangir. He apparently thought that the Emperor did not recognize his talents to the full extent that they deserved, but on the whole his verdict was a favourable one. One phase of the Mogul's character of which Coryat approved was that he "loved not shifters of religion."

À propos he tells a characteristic story. One day Jehangir inquired of a prominent Armenian in his employ whether he thought that "either he or the padres had converted one Moor to be a true Christian . . . for conscience' sake." The Armenian replied with confidence that he could produce such a man. Jehangir's curiosity prompted him to send forthwith for the convert. When the man arrived he was asked by the Emperor why he had become a Christian, and he replied with "certain feeble, implicate Jesuitical reasons," declaring that he would never be other than

a Christian. Upon this Jehangir endeavoured first by reasoning and then by threats "to draw the man to the folly of Mohammed." But he remained steadfast in his opinions, even under the pain of a severe chastisement. Seeing that the man was not to be moved, the Mogul commended his constancy, and sent him back to his master with the intimation that he would receive henceforth a pension of one rupee a day from the imperial exchequer,

Some little time after this Jehangir, on returning from a hunting expedition, sent the Armenian a present of a wild hog that formed a part of the spoils of the chase. The duty of removing the gift devolved upon the convert, and as he was conveying it through the streets he was hooted at by a crowd of Mohammedans, who were angry that one who had been numbered amongst the faithful should handle the unclean beast. In mingled terror and shame the man cast his burden into a ditch and went home. Some days later, on an inquiry being made by the imperial donor as to how the Armenian enjoyed the hog, the whole story came out.

Jehangir again had the man up before him. A frown darkened his countenance as he lectured the culprit, in this style—

"By your law there is no difference of meats, and yet you are ashamed of your laws and to flatter Mohammedans forsake them. Now, I say thou art neither good Christian nor good Mohammedan, but a dissembling knave with both. While I found thee sincere I gave thee a pension which I now take from thee, and for thy dissimulation do command thee to have 100 stripes."

The punishment was forthwith administered, and the unfortunate man was dismissed with a comment by the

Emperor that all men should take warning by his example, and should understand that "as he gave liberty to al religions, that which they chose and professed they must stick unto."

The time came when Coryat, having exhausted the financial possibilities of the Mogul capital, prepared to return home. Not, we may suppose, without a sigh of satisfaction at the prospect of ridding himself of so equivocal a guest, Roe gave the wanderer a letter of introduction to the English Consul at Aleppo, asking him to receive Coryat with courtesy, "for you shall find him a very honest poor wretch," and further requesting him to pay the bearer £10.

Terry says that the eccentric "liked the gift well," but that he could not get over the terms in which he was commended: "Honest, poor wretch!" "To say no more of him was to say nothing."

Coryat contrasted Roe's grudging recommendation with a letter he had received from Sir Henry Wotton, the English minister at Venice, which was in these terms—

"My Lord, good wine needs no bush, neither a worthy man letters commendatory, because whithersoever he comes he is his own epistle."

Poor Coryat seems to have missed the irony of this model letter. There was a vein of simplicity in him which rendered him proof against the ordinary shafts of satire. But that very quality laid him open to dangers which a man of better balance might have avoided. After quitting Ajmere he made for Surat, and on reaching that port was hospitably received by the members of the English factory. In course of conversation mention was made of some sack which had just been imported from England. The poor wanderer's eyes glistened at the mention of his

favourite drink, to which he had so long, perforce, been a stranger.

"Sack! Sack!" he exclaimed. "Is there any such thing as sack? I pray you, give me more sack," "and drinking it though moderately," says Terry, "it increased his flux which he had then upon him, and this caused his death in December, 1617."

In a grave afterwards covered with a modest stone like those in the old churchyards at home, Coryat's remains were laid to rest in the English God's Acre at Surat. Time has obliterated the evidence of the exact whereabouts of the grave, but the memory of the strange creature's irruption into the India of the Great Moguls with its whimsical features must always have a fascination for all who take pleasure in noting the lights and shades of human character.

Roe was too deeply engaged with matters of importance to give his quaint friend's death more than a passing tribute of regret. The old trouble about the delivery of the presents had come up in a new and rather menacing form. On the arrival of the consignment at Surat, Prince Khurrum caused his seals to be put upon the articles with the intent that nothing should be opened without his cognizance. Roe's independent spirit chafed under this new assertion of the prince's power. He forwarded to the Emperor a request that the ban should be removed, and, when after a delay of twenty days no reply had been received, he proceeded to break the seals. His offence was an enormous one in the light of Mogul tradition. It brought him for the first time under the displeasure of Jehangir. When Roe attended him the Emperor "set on it an angrie countenance: told mee I had broken my word: that hee would trust me no more." Roe in reply calmly maintained that

he had done no wrong, and said that if he had acted unlawfully he had sinned in ignorance.

In the end the storm, which at one time threatened to have really serious consequences for Roe, blew over, and he was able to give his thoughts to arrangements for his departure from India. The directors had written out asking him to extend his service by another year, but Roe was altogether disinclined to prolong an exile which had already become almost unbearable. His thoughts of home were given a sharper turn as the year 1618 wore on by a terrible outbreak of plague at Ahmedabad, which affected everybody in the English factory but Roe, and which carried off the greater part of the staff.

In resolute fashion the ambassador approached once more the question of permanent facilities for trade, and by a persistent course of advocacy, with the exercise of strict moderation in his demands, he at length in September, 1618, obtained a satisfactory arrangement. The chief points in the agreement were: (1) that the English should be well treated; (2) that they should have free trade on payment of Customs dues; (3) that their presents to the Emperor should not be subject to search at Surat; (4) that the effects of any Englishman who died should be handed over to Englishmen. A supplementary agreement made with Prince Khurrum stipulated (1) that the governor of Surat should lend ships to the English in the event of an attack by the Portuguese; (2) that resident English merchants might wear arms; (3) that the English might be allowed to build a house in Surat; (4) that they should have free exercise of their religion; (5) that they should be allowed to settle disputes amongst themselves.

Such, in brief, were the terms of this concordat, which

thoroughly regularized the position of the English in India for the first time. It was not a treaty, but only a *firman*, such as Roe, at the outset of his mission, declared he would not accept. Limited, however, as was its diplomatic character, it served the main purpose of giving the East India Company a definite status and a basis of self-government which saved its representatives from the worst effects of local oppression.

His work completed, and tired in mind and body, Roe quitted India on February 17, 1619, arriving home in the following September. The King received him at Hampton Court in private audience, and the Company showed their appreciation of his work by making him a grant of £1,500 and electing him for a year an extra member of the Committee, with an emolument of £200 a year. During the remainder of his life, which was protracted to 1644, Roe kept in touch with Indian affairs, but he was not again prominently identified with the peninsula. His remains rest in Woodford Church, Essex.

The question has sometimes been discussed whether Roe's mission accomplished anything beyond what the Company's representatives could have obtained in the ordinary way. It is impossible, of course, to say definitely what might have happened if Roe had never gone to India, but if the facts are looked at in the light of history, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that to his personal influence was due the priority of opportunity given to the English amongst the nations of the West in the Mogul's territory. By his strong, intelligent diplomacy the barrier which blocked the path of English trade was surmounted and at the same time a tradition of English thoroughness and integrity was established which secured for the nation

the honourable treatment that it would not otherwise have obtained, at that early period at all events. His is the glory that he was the chief pioneer of that wonderful influence which has overspread India and permeated Asia and won for Britain a place such as no other country has occupied in the world's history.

CHAPTER XII

English and Dutch Rivalry in the East

The fight for the spice trade—The Dutch predominance in the Eastern Archipelago—Dutch hostility to the English—Jourdain's expedition to the Moluccas—Jan Pietersoon Coen, the great Dutch administrator—His interview with Jourdain—Jourdain driven from the Moluccas—Deplorable condition of the English at Bantam—The English occupy Poolo Ai—Further English expedition to the Moluccas—Its withdrawal—Dutch re-occupy Poolo Ai

THERE are many strange features about the establishment of British power in Asia, but none quite so remarkable as the circumstances which fixed the centre of English authority in India in the earliest period. The East India Company, when it embarked on its enterprise, as has been narrated, concentrated its attention on the spice trade. If it thought of India at all it was only as a possible secondary field which might be developed in some future period. It was very much in this spirit of vague adventure that the Company's agents first went to Surat and they were established there far more by the fortuitous association of Sir Henry Middleton with the Indian traders in the Red Sea, than by any arrangements definitely made with that end. Roe's Embassy, no doubt, was in the nature of a carefully planned endeavour to obtain a permanent foothold on the Continent of India. But when we turn to look at the circumstances which attended and followed it we

cannot fail to be struck once more with "the stream of tendency" which, apart from direct initiative, induced, we might almost say compelled, the English to regard India as their first and greatest charge.

Prominently amongst these influences was the long struggle for ascendancy in the Eastern Seas which the English and Dutch waged in these early years of the seventeenth century. That contest, as the narrative will show, continued over a long period, more than two centuries, in fact—but the main issue of whether English or Dutch influence should predominate in the Eastern Archipelago was settled in the very earliest years by the overwhelming strength which the Dutch were able to concentrate in the disputed region. The English might have asserted themselves with effect even against these great odds if they had not taken upon themselves their Indian responsibilities. But it was more to them to widen their splendid opportunities in India than to stake their all on a dubious contest to secure possession of markets which could not be held without vast expenditure. So each dropped gradually into its appointed place in Asia, the English securing a position of commercial influence and ultimately of political supremacy on the Indian Continent, and the Dutch obtaining a like predominancy in the Eastern Archipelago. Neither was able ultimately to challenge seriously its opponent on its own special ground. By that very fact the destiny of each was more securely fixed, for it is obvious that if there had been less definitely marked spheres of influence the final result must have been very different by the action and counteraction of rivalries and conflicting interests.

The prize for which English and Dutch contended in the Eastern Seas was a fascinating one. From the remotest

ages the Spice Islands had figured in the world's history as a region of surpassing natural wealth. They had contributed to the dead Empires of Africa and of Asia the peculiar products which were necessary adjuncts of their civilization. They had ministered to the luxuries of Rome in her palmiest days, and later, as Raffles has aptly pointed out, through their influence on the commerce of the Italian States, had "communicated the first electric spark which awoke to life the energies and the literature of Europe." Portugal, too, had derived not a little of the wealth, which brought her for a period to the front rank of European nations, from these beautiful islets, while the Dutch, even in the short period of their connexion with the region, had drawn immense sums from the highly profitable trade which they had established in their staple products. These circumstances sufficiently account for the dogged resolution with which the exclusive policy was pursued from the very first moment that the English competition in the region became serious.

Of the two races, as the reader knows, the English were the first to exploit the Spice Islands. Sir Francis Drake visited them on the occasion of his famous voyage round the world in 1579, and established relations which, if they had been followed up, would have changed the whole situation. But nothing further was done for many years, and meanwhile the Dutch had made the best use of their opportunities. Instead of sending out a few ships at irregular intervals, they directed to the Eastern Seas a constant succession of well-equipped fleets which penetrated to every part of the Archipelago to the great enhancement of Dutch influence.

Quite early in their Eastern career they came into violent

collision with the Portuguese who, with their historic stronghold at Malacca, were able to impose a formidable barrier to the progress of the adventurers. The Hollanders accepted the challenge with a spirit which doubtless took a keener edge from the memory of wrongs perpetrated in the Low Countries by the predecessors of the then ruler of Portugal and Spain. In one great fight off Malacca in 1606 the Dutch lost no fewer than 600 men killed. There were other actions less deadly, but whose cumulative effect must have been to place a great drain upon the Company's resources. With such stubborn determination was the war carried on that in 1607 it was stated in a communication from the English Ambassador in Spain to the Government in England that the losses incurred in the East Indies by the allied nations at the hands of the Dutch were of such a character as to have inflicted "in those places a wound almost incurable." In point of fact, within ten years of their first appearance in the Eastern Seas the Dutch had firmly established their power almost throughout the region in which the spice trade was actively prosecuted.

It would have argued an exceptionally generous temperament on the part of the Dutch, in view of the enormous sacrifices in blood and treasure they had made to secure a paramount position, if they had regarded the efforts of the English to engage in the spice trade in the Archipelago otherwise than with distrust and dislike. Rightly or wrongly they considered themselves the sole inheritors by virtue of their conquests of the Portuguese and Spanish monopoly, and they were the more disposed to adopt this view as they had from the very outset concluded with the native chiefs of the various islands, and notably with the King of Ternate, one of the Moluccas group, who stood

in the relation of suzerain to many of the minor princes, agreements or treaties under which the local authorities bound themselves to supply their spices only to the Dutch and to them under rigid conditions which practically made serfs of the islanders. But if the Dutch attitude was a natural one still more so was that of the English when they resolutely declined to accept the theory of exclusive rights which their trade rivals sought to establish. They took the line that the seas were open to all, that free trade was an inalienable right of every nation, and that if the Hollanders had done the principal part in breaking the Portuguese monopoly, they would never have achieved the amount of success they did if the way had not been prepared for them by England's defeat of the Great Armada in 1588.

In a controversy of this character, in which there was an element of right on each side, and in which there was a substantial financial interest involved the issue was certain to be fiercely contested. But probably neither party at the outset dreamed that so bitter and prolonged a quarrel would develop from it as that it gave rise to. The English, at all events, seem to have had little conception of the difficulties which the Dutch were to interpose to their trading until they were actually confronted with them.

The earliest purely trading visit paid to the Moluccas was that made by Sir Henry Middleton in 1604. On this occasion excellent relations were established with the natives and, no doubt, if the voyage had been followed up immediately a lodgment might have been effected which the Dutch could not have challenged. But nothing further of consequence was done until 1609 when Keeling took a ship to the Moluccas and was warned off by the Dutch in

such circumstances as to leave him no alternative but to comply with the mandate. David Middleton in 1610 had a like experience when he attempted to trade with Banda, one of the principal islands of the group.

At last the English Company's eyes were opened to the full significance of the claims made by the Dutch. In their indignation they appealed to the Government through the Lord Treasurer for redress of their "notorious injuries." The response came somewhat later in the appointment of Joint Commissioners by England and Holland to consider the points in dispute. The conference, which was held in London in 1613, sat for two months without result and was then dissolved on the understanding that the matters should be reconsidered later.

Meanwhile, another effort was being made to penetrate the monopolistic wall which the Dutch had raised in the Moluccas. Jourdain, whose acquaintance the reader has made in a previous chapter, early in 1613 proceeded from Bantam to the Moluccas in the *Darling*. The natives who had had a taste of the cruel mercies of the Dutch, everywhere he touched received him with enthusiasm, but he had not been long in the islands before he received from Steven Coteels, the Dutch Resident at Amboina, a warning not to trade with the natives in spices, on the ground that to do so would be to infringe Dutch rights. Later on this was endorsed in peremptory terms in a letter sent by Coteel's superior, the Governor of Amboina.

Jourdain, who was of the true bull-dog type of commander which the Company's service seemed to breed, forwarded a defiant message in reply, asserting that the trade of the islands was free to all men, stating that he knew of no contracts with the natives, and declaring that even if

such existed they did not concern him. Acting on this independent view he commenced to trade at Hitoe, but had not proceeded far before he discovered that the islanders were in such deadly fear of the Hollanders that he could do little business. Jourdain now turned his attention to Ceram, an adjoining island of the group, which appeared to offer better prospects, as the Dutch influence there was not so powerful as at Amboina. At Luhu, one of the principal ports of the island, the English Commander saw the native chief and preferred to him a request for a site for a factory. The chief replied that the application must be made to the King of Ternate, but he allowed it to be understood that the English would be welcomed if they could be sure that they would not suffer for their display of friendliness at the hands of the Dutch.

In consequence of this declaration Jourdain decided to seek an interview with the Dutch Governor in order to satisfy himself as to the precise attitude that was assumed. At the Dutch headquarters he found in the supreme official position Jan Pietersoon Coen, thereafter to become famous in Dutch history as the greatest of Governor Generals of Netherlands India. Coen was a man of stern, unyielding disposition, ambitious, and, according to his lights, intensely patriotic. He was largely the inspirer of the Dutch monopolistic policy and he pursued it throughout his career with a determination and a skill which largely contributed to the measure of success which ultimately attended it.

The meeting between two such men on an occasion in which clashing interests were so sharply opposed was bound to be of a stormy character. It was all that, if we may accept the account of the interview which Jourdain sets forth in his diary. From this it is to be gathered that

Coen met the Englishman's hot protests against the exclusion of his ship from the trade of the islands by a torrent of objurgation. "In cholleric manner he (Coen) upbraided him for lingering in the countries that were under their protection as itt were in despite of them, affirming that whosoever bought any cloves in these countries without their consent so much stole from them and, therefore, they would prevent it if by any means they might." Jourdain retorted in kind, reaffirming in the strongest language that the trade of the islands was as free to the English as it was to the Dutch and that they would not be driven from the region by Dutch threatenings. The conference closed with a display of angry feeling which boded ill for the future relations of the two races.

At a later period in the day Jourdain attended a gathering of the leading natives, who having been told the upshot of the interview, protested in vehement terms their desire for commercial relations with the English. As Coen had denied that the islanders were willing to trade with any outsiders, the Dutch officials were summoned to hear from their own lips the truth. The Hollanders attended with reluctance and listened in silence to the declarations of the chiefs in favour of free trade. But the next day a letter, which was virtually an ultimatum, was sent to the English Commander directing him to depart. The missive was returned by Jourdain on the ground that he could not understand Dutch. A day or two later another communication was forthcoming, written in Portuguese and directing the English Commander in even more peremptory terms to depart the country or take the consequences. By this time all trade with the natives had ceased and it had become clear that the earlier relations could not be restored

without a greater force than that at Jourdain's disposal. Recognizing the hopelessness of his position the English Commander, when he had taken in supplies at an adjoining port, departed for Bantam.

After calling at Macassar on his way and establishing a small factory there, under the charge of George Cokayne, Jourdain reached the Javan port towards the end of 1613. A terrible disappointment awaited him here. He had expected to find a flourishing English factory with resources which would have enabled him to renew the struggle with the Dutch, but when he entered the port there were no signs of English life. On the Dutch factory the ensign was hoisted and struck twice in curious fashion, as if to give warning to the incoming ship. Jourdain, accepting the signal in this light, called his men to action and cast loose his ordnance to be ready for any emergency. After a period of suspense a boat came off from the shore and four Englishmen, "all of them like ghosts or men fraighted" clambered with difficulty on board. They brought with them lamentable tidings of the condition of the factory. "I could not number any man of note, but was dead of the the number of 140 persons," wrote Jourdain, "and the rest which were remaining as well on land as aboard the *Trade's Increase* were all sick, these four persons being the strongest of them, who were scarce able to keep on their legges."

In the presence of such a lamentable condition of weakness Jourdain had to dismiss all thoughts of further action Eastward and concentrate his attention on the question of saving the situation at Bantam. The whole of 1614 slipped away without any means offering of taking up the Dutch challenge. Mainly through the Agent at Macassar came

to hand many urgent messages from the Bandanese, imploring English help against their Dutch oppressors. Since Jourdain's visit a state of almost open warfare had existed on the islands in which the Dutch, under Coen, had acted with ruthless severity. Eager as the Company's agents were to intervene, it was not until the opening weeks of 1615 that they were in a position to send ships. At that juncture they dispatched, with George Ball and Cokayne, the Maccasar agent, in command, the ship *Concord* and a small pinnace called the *Speedwell*, to the Bandas and Ceram.

Ignoring the protests of the Dutch, the Englishmen occupied Poolo Ai, a small island off Banda, and entered into close relations with the natives on the adjacent and larger islands. They were received with an enthusiasm which spoke eloquently of the islanders' hopes of relief from the oppressive yoke which had been imposed upon them. In touching language the natives gave vent to their feelings as to the Dutch. Visiting the town of Lonthor, the Englishmen were received by two of the principal men, one of whom, pointing to the Dutch castle burst out :—

"It makes old men to weep and wish that the child that is unborn shall be born dead : as God hath given them a country to them and theirs, so He hath sent the Hollanders as a plage unto them, making wars upon them and by unjust proceedings seeking to take their country from them."

The Dutch appear to have been equally communicative to the Englishmen and quite as outspoken. Cokayne was told by the Dutch "General" that the English were "rogues and rascals," and the Honourable Company was "most vilely railed at" by the same functionary.

In the Straits of Amboina, whither the *Concord* proceeded, a welcome reinforcement was met in the vessel *Thomassin* which had been sent on from Bantam. Encouraged by the appearance of English strength, the natives were everywhere extremely friendly, and both at Luhu and Cambello sites for factories were offered. But the Dutch were speedily upon the scene in such force that after an exchange of shots with them the English were compelled to withdraw and return to Bantam.

On their departure the Dutch turned on the unfortunate natives intent on wreaking revenge on them for the encouragement they had given to their hated rivals. Their first efforts were marked by a disaster which might have had grave consequences for them if the English had been at hand to give the natives efficient backing. On landing a large body of men on Banda the force was attacked by natives and had to retire with a loss of upwards of three hundred men—a very substantial proportion of the total garrison in the Moluccas at the period. Encouraged by this success the natives sent an envoy to the English authorities at Bantam to implore their support in the further stages of the contest. Jourdain, who was in charge, in response to the appeal re-equipped the *Thomassin*, the *Concord* and the *Speedwell*, and with the ships *Clove* and *Defence*, which had just arrived from England, despatched them to Banda in the early days of 1616.

The little squadron arrived at Poolo Ai on March 2, and found that the Dutch were concentrating a large force at Neira, a port opposite Lonthor, in Banda, intent on wiping out the reverse of the previous year. The moment seemed at last to have come when conclusions would be tried between the Dutch and the English. On March 11

a fleet of nine Dutch ships appeared off Poolo Ai with the declared determination of either driving the English ships away or sinking them.

At a council of war held on the English Admiral's ship it was decided to "stand the coming of the Hollanders." Two days later, when the Dutch ships had approached much nearer a second council was held at which the resolution was formed to "cut hawsers, let slip their cables and go out to meet the Hollanders." The Dutch, on their side, were not idle. Four of their ships "worked to the windward and seized the weathergage," while the remainder spread to leeward to block the progress of the ships in that direction. The manœuvre brought home to the English Commander the risks which he would run in forcing an action. While the Dutch ships were all well found and well manned, his own vessels were small and had only weak crews. On resurveying the situation he came to the conclusion that he ought not to incur the great responsibility of fighting with the odds so heavily against him. He therefore concluded an arrangement with the Dutch by which he withdrew his vessels, leaving the unfortunate natives once more to the tender mercies of their taskmasters. An attempt was made by the so-called rebels on Poolo Ai to secure immunity by hoisting the English flag, but the Dutch landed on the island, tore down the flag and afterwards built a strong fort, which they christened Fort Revenge, to strengthen their hold upon the island.

CHAPTER XIII

Faithful unto Death

New expedition to the Moluccas under Nathaniel Courthope—Occupation of Poolo Roon by the English—Dutch expedition to evict the English—Courthope's defiance—The Dutch capture the English ship *Swan*—Courthope prepares for a Dutch attack—The English ship *Defence* captured by the Dutch—The Dutch Governor General Reaal seeks an accommodation with Courthope—Courthope declines his terms—Dutch proclamation against the English—Unsuccessful attempt to relieve Courthope—Courthope's indomitable spirit—Sir Thomas Dale conducts an expedition against the Dutch—Action off Batavia—The Dutch retire to the Moluccas—English occupation of Jakatra (Batavia)—Dale returns to India—His death—Dutch attack on English ships at Patani—Jourdain is treacherously slain—Isolation of Courthope—His gallant fight against odds and his heroic end

JOURDAIN, though naturally mortified at the failure of his plans, was not disposed to give up the attempt to break the Dutch monopoly, more especially as he was imbued with the belief that the Hollanders would not use force if they were put to the extreme test. Once more he prepared to send an expedition to the Eastward. Besides the *Defence*, of 300 tons, he had available for the purpose a new ship, the *Swan*, of 400 tons. What was more to the purpose, he had at hand in Nathaniel Courthope just the right kind of man to take the command in such an enterprise.

Courthope is a name little known in English history,

yet it is entitled to a high place amongst the list of humble heroes who in various parts of the world and in differing situations have at one time or another "kept the flag flying." Until he was entrusted with the command of this expedition he does not appear to have occupied any very responsible position, but Jourdain doubtless knew his worth and selected him especially for those strong qualities which he displayed so conspicuously in this adventure, the details of which we have now to relate.

The instructions given to Courthope directed him, after a call at Macassar, to proceed to Poolo Roon, an island near Poolo Ai, where he was to make inquiry as to the relations between the Dutch and the natives, and if possible to induce the latter to ratify under their hands and seals a formal surrender of all or part of such island as was at their disposal. A similar course was to be adopted in the cases of Lonthor and Rosengyn, but he was to take no action in regard to Poolo Ai beyond notifying the Dutch of the English claim to the island. He was further instructed to land ordnance on Poolo Roon, if the natives should request him to do so. Finally, he was specially cautioned as to his behaviour towards the islanders who were described as "peevish, perverse, diffident and perfidious, apt to take disgust on small occasions, and being moved are more cumbersome than wasps."

On arrival off Poolo Roon early in 1617 Courthope proceeded at once to make his commission effective. The native authorities cordially responded to his request to agree to a transfer of the island. They did this in the approved fashion "with earth and a young nutmeg tree and with writings drawn and confirmed under the hand of the principal gentry and seal or chop of the country."

Thereafter the English flag was hoisted and saluted and six guns were landed and mounted in two batteries near the shore in preparation for all eventualities. The Dutch were not slow to take up the gauntlet which Courthope had so defiantly thrown down. A few days after the ceremony described, Cornelis Dedel, the Dutch Commander at Neira, appeared off Poolo Roon with three ships fully manned, prepared to evict the intruders. He anchored two of his vessels near the *Swan* and *Defence* and the third was placed between the ships and the shore to prevent assistance being rendered from that quarter. But Dedel had reckoned without the shore batteries, and when he discovered these and found also that the natives were fully prepared to back the English he reluctantly withdrew to await reinforcements from Amboina.

The next move on the Dutch side was to send a pinnace to take soundings off a small island called Nailaka which lies close to the northern shore of Poolo Roon. This position, if in Dutch hands, would have enabled them to dominate the anchorage at Poolo Roon, and accordingly by Courthope's orders shots were fired at the pinnace to drive her away. No damage was done or was intended, but the firing was a direct act of hostility which the Dutch were quick to utilize as a justification for their own acts of violence which followed.

Courthope's position, which was never strong, was weakened at this critical moment by dissensions which appeared in the ships' companies and notably amongst the landsmen who did not relish the prospect before them of spending an indefinite time on this remote island. Davis, the master of the *Swan*, sided with the disaffected faction, and announced his intention to take his ship to

Lonthor to fill his water casks. When Courthope found that his colleague was not to be dissuaded from his headstrong course by his earnest representations as to the danger which he would incur in separating from him at such a time of crisis, he instructed him to proceed to Rosengyn and establish there a factory which the natives had expressed their willingness to permit. Davis carried out this order, entering into an agreement with the island authorities similar to that concluded by Courthope at Poolo Roon. He then directed his course to Ceram to a point where he knew he could obtain water. After a few days spent at this spot in watering and victualling operations he started on the return voyage to Poolo Roon. But he had not proceeded far before he encountered the Dutch ship *Morgenstine* with Dedel in command.

A fierce attack was at once delivered by the Hollanders whose superiority in men and armament was so marked that the result of the conflict was never seriously in doubt. In a short space of time many of the small crew were either killed or wounded by the well sustained fire maintained by the Dutch soldiers who crowded the deck of the *Morgenstine*. The vessel then fell an easy prize to the Dutch. It was taken in triumph to Neira, the Hollanders "much glorying in this victory, showing the Bandanese their exploit in the great disgrace of the English . . . saying that the King of England might not compare with their great King of Holland, and that one Holland ship would take ten of the English ships and that St. George is now turned child."

When Courthope heard of the capture of the *Swan* he sent the purser of the *Defence* under a flag of truce to demand her restitution. As he had probably anticipated,

the reply of the Dutch was a contemptuous refusal. Before his envoy returned he had worked out for himself a complete plan of defence based on the idea that he would have to rely upon his own resources probably for a considerable period. He dismantled the *Defence* and had her guns and stores removed to Nailaka, which he converted into a fortified camp sufficiently strong to resist almost any attack that the Dutch were likely to make upon it. The empty ship, he contemplated, should be moored near the shore so that she could not be readily attacked, or if attacked might be destroyed to save her from capture.

The scheme was probably as sound a one as could have been devised in the peculiar circumstances in which Courthope was placed, but there were traitors in camp and one night the *Defence* was cut adrift and taken by the mutineers into Neira, where she was surrendered to the Dutch. Courthope's only satisfaction was that a number of loyal men put off in a boat at some peril to themselves and succeeded in rejoining him.

This additional blow was a heavy one, but Courthope, though now completely isolated, declined to give up the fight. His spirit of determination, indeed, seems to have taken a sterner form as his position became more difficult.

Laurence Reaal, the Governor-General, had himself at this time taken over the direction of affairs in the Eastern Islands, and being desirous of making if possible an amicable arrangement sent an invitation to Courthope for a conference. The English commander attended and entered into a long debate on the position of affairs which had been created by recent events. Reaal offered to return the captured ships and men, to pay compensation

for all articles taken from them and to assist the English to depart in safety with the valuable cargo of spices they had obtained at Poolo Roon in exchange for their goods.

Courthope's answer was a flat refusal. "I could not," he said, "unless I should turn traitor unto my King and country in giving up that right which I am able to hold and also betray the country people who had surrendered up their land to our King's Majesty." It was the kind of answer that might have been looked for from one of Courthope's character, but it irritated Reaal who had set his heart on getting this troublesome Englishman out of the way without yielding any material point. He "threw his hat on the ground and pulled his beard for anger." As a concession Courthope afterwards offered to depart in the *Defence* provided Reaal would agree to allow the questions in dispute to be settled in Europe and would pledge himself in the meantime to make no attack on the Bandanese. But Reaal would not listen to any suggestion which allowed of English interference with the internal affairs of the islands.

Nothing now remained but for the representatives of the two nations to fight out the quarrel to the bitter end. They proceeded to do so with the dour determination which might have been looked for from two such antagonists. The advantage, as the narrative makes clear, was markedly in favour of the Dutch. They had a number of strongly fortified positions, a considerable fleet of well manned ships, and hundreds of trained soldiers which with their undisputed command of the sea could be brought to bear upon any point to which they desired to direct their operations. The surrender of large masses of the Bandan-

ese at this juncture by freeing their hands for the attack on their rivals gave them an additional advantage of no unimportant kind.

It is impossible that Courthope could have been ignorant of the enormous risks he was taking in declining the accommodation offered by the Dutch. His excellent secret service, supplied by the islanders whose prows enabled them to keep up communications with the inhabitants of the other islands of the group in spite of the Dutch, kept him informed of every move on the enemy's side. He had, besides, more direct sources of information in the deserters who from time to time came over to him from one or other of the Dutch ports. Knowing, all he might without any reflection upon his courage have walked the golden bridge which Reaal essayed to build for him. But his heart was in this struggle which he felt he was waging for the honour of his country, and he resolutely put behind him the suggestion that he should abandon his post on any terms which would make difficult the future revival of English rights to a share in the trade. He confidently calculated that when his need was known to his superiors adequate assistance would be sent him to enable him to make good the foothold which he had secured in the islands with so much trouble and cost. In this he was not altogether wrong, as the sequel will show, but neither he nor his principals had taken adequate measure of the strength of the Dutch position and of the tenacity of their resolve to keep their monopoly intact.

Reaal, on his return to the Dutch headquarters at Jakatra, the modern Batavia, in a proclamation issued in November, 1617, fulminated in strong language against the attempts that were being made to subvert the Dutch

monopoly. Courthope was not named in this; nor was there any specific mention of the English Company. The reference was in general terms to "French, Scotch, and other foreigners" and "even men of our own nation" who sought to make the Dutch Company's charter illusory by their illicit trading. Dutch commanders were everywhere directed "to attack with arms vehemently" all who were found trading in the islands and to capture and confiscate their ships.

The day following the issue of the proclamation a communication was sent to the English factory at Jakatra demanding the evacuation of Poolo Roon, and warning the English against sending ships to the Moluccas. "If you refuse," said Reaal, "we shall have to help ourselves with all means time and opportunity will give us, believing ourselves to be guiltless before God and the world."

An indignant protest was lodged by Ball, the English chief, against this virtual declaration of war. They were not, he said, to be deterred by any such action from what was just and honest. "Neither is the custom of ill strife in us as in yourselves who, contrary to the bonds of amity betwixt his Majesty of England and States of the United Provinces have most unjustly and in hostile manner robbed our employers of their ships and goods, and murdered and imprisoned their people." As for the demand for the evacuation of Poolo Roon that island belonged to the Crown of England and would in all reason be "defended and made good against all unjust demands and actionc whatsoever." The writer charged Reaal by the bonds of amity between the two nations and on the faith of a Christian to persist not in his course to the effusion of blood. "Hitherto," he concluded, "I have shed no blood, and

if blood must be shed it shall not be my fault, it being lawful in defence of myself to do my best."

The next important move in the conflict was in the early months of 1618 when the English dispatched three ships to the Moluccas to relieve Courthope and further develop the trade with the islands. They apparently thought that the number would be sufficient to ensure their safety, but the Dutch had concentrated their forces with the special object of dealing with the English flotilla and did not hesitate to oppose it as soon as a favourable opportunity offered.

As the *Solomon*, one of the three ships, was off Banda she encountered four large Dutch vessels which, without any ado, proceeded to attack her. The English ship was so deeply laden that she could not use her lower tier of ordnance. She was further embarrassed by a lack of ammunition. Nevertheless she fought on from two o'clock in the afternoon until nine at night. By this time the contesting ships were quite close to each other—" almost board and board "—and it was possible for the combatants to enter into conversation with each other.

Cassarian, the English commander, opened a parley with the result that he on the demand of the Dutch commander struck his colours and went on board the enemy's flagship. As he did not return his crew assumed that he had been detained a prisoner. Their first care was to disarm the party of Bandanese on board, whose assistance they had had in the fight and whose exasperation at the turn events had taken might they feared take the form of a general running *amok*. The precaution, as events proved, was not an unnecessary one. When the Hollanders came to take possession of the ship two of the Bandanese

who had managed to secrete their terrible krises fell upon the invaders and cut a number of them to pieces before they themselves were killed. The English portion of the crew took no part in this incident on either side, but their neutrality did not save them from the resentment of the Dutch who treated them with persistent cruelty during their subsequent confinement.

Courthope was intensely mortified at the surrender of the ship. He declared in a letter describing the fight that rather than have yielded as Cassarian had done he "would have sunken right down in the sea first." He spoke no more than the truth; his whole being was animated with the feeling that to yield would be a disgrace not to be borne. Yet nothing hardly could have been more desperate than his position at this juncture. His small force had been weakened considerably by sickness and his supplies were so reduced that the garrison were compelled to exist largely on bread made from the fruit of the sago tree. On the other hand the Dutch had eight ships and two galleys fully armed ready to make a descent upon the island at the first favourable opportunity. For their advent Courthope, to use his own words, looked "daily and hourly," and he could not disguise from himself that the issue must go against him, the odds being what they were; though he consoled himself with the grim reflection that "if they win it, by God's help I make no doubt but they shall pay full dearly for it with much effusion of blood."

When news reached Courthope as it did later that the English prisoners were being cruelly illtreated by their captors he indited a letter of strong denunciation of the inhumanity of the Hollanders to one of the captives.

"What extremity the Dutch useth unto you," he wrote, "they shall have their measure full and abounding either in gentleness or rigour; and whereas they have heretofore protested fire and sword, fire and sword they shall have repaid unto their bosoms."

Fierce as was the spirit of the indomitable Courthope he had a singularly happy gift of attaching to himself the affection of his followers. When some of the men revolted against the coarse sago bread which now constituted almost their sole rations, "his mild carriage and earnest protestations" won them back to their allegiance. It was always so when the burden seemed almost too great for the ordinary seaman to bear. A reminder of their duty coupled with a personal plea for patience made them invariably his devoted followers once more. His influence over the natives was also remarkable. They rallied to him as they had rallied to no Englishman before, and they fought under him with a resolution which caused the Dutch to entertain a wholesome fear of invading the island. When at length some weeks after the capture of the *Solomon* they did essay an attack with a force of 700 men, they were defeated with an ease which suggested that the disciplinary influence of the gallant Englishman had gone very deep.

Months went by without any material change in the situation, Courthope hoping against hope all the while, holding his tight little island with undiminished determination. At length early in 1619 his heart was gladdened with the news that Sir Thomas Dale with a considerable English fleet had won a victory over the Dutch and was coming to his relief. It now seemed that the fruits of his long and stubborn stand for the rights of his country were to be

reaped and throughout the island there went up a shout of anticipatory triumph. But, alas! the sanguine hopes aroused were destined never to be realized for reasons which must now be related.

Sir Thomas Dale, one of the most experienced commanders of the Company at the time, was sent in 1619 from India to Bantam charged with the special duty of protecting English shipping and English interests from the attacks of the Dutch. In his early days Dale had served as a military commander in the service of the States General. But he is best known as one of the first governors of the infant Colony of Virginia. It was he who brought over to England the celebrated Princess Pocohontas whose romantic story so stirred the sentimental hearts of a past generation. He was a bluff, choleric type of man, ready of tongue and in official matters exacting and punctilious. He was rather feared than loved by those under him. As far as the particular service upon which he was engaged was concerned, he was at a distinct disadvantage owing to the fact that his experience in positions of authority had been gained in the West and not in the East.

On receiving at Bantam the intelligence of the latest moves of the Dutch, Dale's hot blood boiled over with indignation. He swore with all the freedom which he allowed himself that he would have vengeance of these ruffianly Hollanders, and especially of that arch enemy of the English, Jan Pietersoon Coen, who had distinguished himself by his cruel treatment of the English prisoners in his hands.

As a preliminary to larger operations Dale seized a Dutch vessel called the *Zwarte Leeuw* (Black Lion) and put her crew ashore with the intimation that if he caught

them again he would hang every man of them from the yard-arm. The Dutch authorities at Jakatra as soon as they heard of the capture sent a vigorous letter of protest. When it was handed to Dale he " only scolded, stamped on the ground, swore, cursed (and asked) why the letter was written in Dutch and not in French, Spanish or any other language if we (the Dutch) didn't like to write English." He finally told the messenger that he would take the reply to Coen himself, " swearing and cursing that he would take all he could get."

The Dutch retaliated for the capture of the *Zwarte Leeuw* by burning the English factory at Jakatra. Dale wanted to cap this by destroying the Dutch factory at Bantam, but the native authorities interposed and safeguarded it from attack by occupying it with a strong guard.

Dale fumed and fretted over the restraint, but he eventually reconciled himself to the situation in view of the prospect that lay before him of exacting a full measure of retaliation at Jakatra. Collecting all available forces, towards the end of December he descended like an avenging torrent on the Dutch headquarters. His arrival was awaited with extreme anxiety by the Dutch. In the days which had elapsed since they first received news of his expedition there had been frequent and earnest consultations as to the plan of defence. The Dutch weakness was that they were to a certain extent between two fires, as the moment the English attacked on one side it was practically certain that the Javanese would attack on the other. With many misgivings the council ultimately decided to withdraw most of the men from the shore to the ships and to contest the issue solely on the sea. In this way it was calculated that the conditions of the fight would

be more equalized, though the Dutch ships were only seven to the enemy's eleven and several of them were in a very poor condition.

On the morning of December 30, the English fleet hove in sight off Jakatra. Coen, who had by this time become Governor-General, assuming the command of the Dutch ships, went out to meet the enemy, not omitting, however, beforehand to dispatch a small craft to Amboina with instructions for a concentration of the entire Dutch forces in the Moluccas with a view to further eventualities. When the two fleets had approached within about a gunshot of each other, Dale sent off a herald to proclaim the reason for his warlike operations and to demand the surrender of the Dutch commander. Needless to say, the answer was a defiant negative. The rest of the day was spent in manœuvring to secure a Dutch ship which in ignorance of the state of affairs had arrived outside the harbour.

The next morning the action commenced in earnest. From eleven in the morning until three in the afternoon the contest continued without intermission, "a cruelle bloodye fight" in which 3,000 great shot were exchanged between the fleets and many men were killed and wounded on each side. Night closed in with the two fleets anchored close to each other without any decisive result having been reached. On the Dutch side a council of war was held to decide a future course of action. The outlook for them was gloomy. Ammunition on all the ships was running short, there were many casualties, and several of the vessels were so damaged as to be scarcely seaworthy. To renew the fight in such circumstances would be perilous in the extreme: yet surrender was not to be thought of.

"It was a puzzling dilemma," as the official Dutch record says, and the members of the council came to the conclusion that it would be better to sleep over it.

When the morning dawned the council was resumed, but the discussions had not continued very long before they were abruptly closed by the news of the appearance of a reinforcement of three ships to Dale's fleet. This addition to the enemy's strength it was felt decided affirmatively the question of the fleet's withdrawal from an unequal contest. Without loss of time the order was passed through the fleet for a return to Jakatra with a view of seeking there the protection of the guns of the fortifications. Anchor was weighed accordingly and the Dutch ships set a course for Jakatra closely followed by the English ships. Before the destination was reached a further council of war was held, as grave doubts were entertained by some as to the wisdom of the plan of taking refuge in harbour. On second thoughts it was determined to leave Jakatra to its fate and to steer a course for the Moluccas where with the resources available a stand might be made with a reasonable prospect of success. Eventually this course was successfully followed.

Dale maintained a curiously supine attitude in the face of this daring retreat of the Dutch. With his strengthened fleet his plain duty was to pursue and overwhelm the enemy, but instead he practically did nothing. His plea in his account of the fight is that he could not imagine that Coen would abandon the position ashore to its fate, but, even so, it is not clear why he did not keep in touch with the Dutch fleet. By allowing it to escape he not only rendered his own sacrifices nugatory, but he sealed the fate of the English cause in the Eastern seas. Never

again in the history of the Company was such an opportunity to offer of breaking down the Dutch monopoly.

Probably the best excuse that can be offered for Dale is that he attached more importance to the capture of the Dutch headquarters than he did to the destruction of their fleet. It may have seemed to him a choice of alternatives in which the balance strongly inclined in favour of the one which would deal the heaviest blow to Dutch prestige. Whether that were his view or not he succeeded in effecting the capture of the Dutch fort at Jakatra without difficulty. Under the terms of the capitulation the fortress and garrison and munitions of war were surrendered to the English, while the merchandise and other movable property fell to the lot of the King of Jakatra. Somewhat earlier the Dutch commander had made a secret agreement with the latter by the terms of which the English were excluded from the locality. As an outcome of this probably the native authorities in the weeks following the capitulation adopted an unfriendly attitude. They not only sent prows into the Straits of Sunda to warn approaching Dutch vessels of their peril, but the Pangeran of Bantam, with a force of 2,000 men, appeared upon the scene and compelled the release of the prisoners.

In the face of the discouraging attitude of the native authorities, Dale felt that it was useless for him to continue the occupation. After taking council with his commanders he decided to withdraw his ships to the Coromandel Court there to refit for a further campaign if such should be deemed desirable. His decision was, perhaps, a sound one on the whole in view of the steady deterioration of his fleet and the danger that he would incur

by remaining at Jakatra, a target for native attack by land and Dutch attack by sea. It was too late now, at all events, to retrieve the original blunder of proceeding eastward in pursuit of Coen. That worthy had had time to combine his scattered forces and replenish his ammunition stores, and was not to be attacked with impunity by any force that the English could now bring to bear.

Shipping all his merchandise and stores Dale started on his voyage with the rankling conviction that he had failed egregiously where he should have been triumphant. His disappointment was accentuated by dissensions which now broke out in an aggravated form amongst his officers. There was resentment in this quarter at his masterful ways and especially at the dictatorial tone he was in the habit of assuming towards every one however highly placed they might be or whatever the question at issue. It was always, says one of his colleagues, " 'I will and require,' 'this must be done,' and 'this shall be done,' and yet in the end we must signe what he says"

Under the weight of his accumulating troubles Dale sickened and died soon after the fleet reached India. Thus the final tragic seal was set on a disastrous venture. It would be unfair, perhaps, to saddle Dale's memory too heavily with the responsibility for the failure. Something must be allowed for the inevitable weakness of a fleet operating many thousand miles from its base against one scarcely inferior in size which had open to it several strong bases. Still, the error of judgment committed in permitting the quiet withdrawal of the Dutch fleet to the Moluccas was too far reaching in its consequences to be lightly overlooked in any estimate of Dale's achievements.

Coen lost no time in re-establishing the Dutch position at Jakatra. Early in March, a few weeks after the retirement of the English, he appeared off the town with sixteen ships and having re-occupied the fort, caused it, on March 12, to be christened Batavia. From this day may be said to date the commencement not merely of the Dutch dominion in Java, but of their supremacy in the Malay Archipelago.

The famous Dutch Governor-General was not a man to do things by halves. When he had consolidated his position at Batavia he turned his thoughts to other parts where the opportunity offered of asserting Dutch power. Amongst the first to fall a victim to his policy of "Thorough" was poor Jourdain, the enterprising commander who did so much to promote the active English policy in the Moluccas. Jourdain in April, 1619, had taken charge at Madras of two ships, the *Hound* and the *Sampson*, which were dispatched by the authorities in India to re-establish an English factory at Patani on the eastern side of the Malay Peninsula. He piloted them to their destination in safety; but in July, some little time after their arrival, they were attacked while at anchor by three large Dutch ships, which entered the port for that purpose. A spirited fight was maintained by the English ships for a considerable period. At length when eleven of the men of the *Sampson* had been killed and thirty-five wounded and the *Hound* had also lost a number of men Jourdain caused a flag of truce to be raised with the object of parleying about peace.

As the negotiations were proceeding between Thomas Hackwell, the master, and the Dutch commander, Jourdain showed himself near the mainmast on the gratings, and the Dutch "espying him most treacherously and

cruelly shot at him with a musket and shot him in the bodie neere the heart, of which wound hee dyed within halfe an hour after." It is difficult to say whether this episode was deliberate or was due to a misunderstanding. The Dutch afterwards strongly repudiated the former hypothesis and there is reason to think that the business was in the nature of an accident. Whether so or not its effect was greatly to exacerbate the feelings of Jourdain's countrymen in the East by whom he was highly respected. So deadly did the feud now become that according to a letter of the period had their fleets met at sea at this juncture " there had never been such a day among Christians."

And what, it may be asked, was the position of Courthope in this acute phase of the feud of the two nations? The answer is not difficult to guess. Brave soul as he was he fought his fight to a glorious finish. How it came about is easily told. When the disheartening news reached Poolo Roon that Dale's fleet had returned to India and that the little body of Englishmen on the island had been abandoned to their fate, Courthope did not, as he might very well have done with honour, surrender to the Dutch. He just went on the same as usual, living his hard life and keeping his weather eye open for the enemy who he knew would come sooner or later.

Eventually what could not be accomplished by force was effected by guile. A Dutch deserter—more probably spy—on learning of Courthope's departure for Lonthor on an expedition connected with some of his people, promptly sailed across to the Dutch headquarters with the information. A boat heavily armed and fully manned was secretly sent over by night to intercept the English commander

on his return. The prow was encountered as anticipated at a point at which it was completely at the Hollanders' mercy. Betrayed and entrapped the intrepid Courthope stood up in his tiny craft like a lion at bay. He returned shot for shot until his "piece being choked" he could fire no more. Still he maintained an undaunted mien until a shot struck him full in the breast. Then without a moment's hesitation, as if he had fully thought out his course of action, he jumped into the water and was seen no more.

The history of the Empire has no finer example of courage and lofty self-sacrifice than the two years' struggle which this splendid seaman maintained almost unaided from without against the serried forces of Dutch power in the East. Of him it may be said, as of an illustrious contemporary :—

> "He nothing common did, or mean,
> Upon that memorable scene."

The road of duty and of patriotism he saw clearly before him and he followed it unerringly with a serene indifference to all personal considerations. There was in him much of the spirit which animated Gordon when he made his glorious last stand in the lonely isolation of the Mahdi's capital. To Courthope, in a humbler way, belongs the same crown of immortality which a grateful nation has bestowed upon the Hero of Khartoum.

CHAPTER XIV

The Black Tragedy of Amboina

Conclusion of the treaty of defence—Disagreements as to its interpretation—The English in the Eastern Islands—Gabriel Towerson, the chief agent—Von Speult, the Dutch governor—Description of Amboina—A Japanese arrested for conspiring against the Dutch—He implicates the English—Abel Price under torture confirms the story—Arrest of Towerson and the other English officials—They are examined and under torture confess their guilt—Subsequent protestations of innocence—The infamy of the transactions

THE great drama of English and Dutch ascendancy in Eastern seas is now rapidly moving towards its tragic *dénouement*. When the curtain lifts again nearly three years have passed since the gallant Courthope made his plunge to death near the scene of his hard-fought struggle for the honour of his country's flag. In the interval much has happened in the West to alter the current of Eastern events. The slow wheels of diplomacy revolving in England have ground out with many checks and much creaking that famous instrument known as the Treaty of Defence which was designed to set at rest the vexed controversies that for so long had disturbed the harmony of the representatives of the two races in the East. It had been received on its first promulgation in the theatre of war with manifestations of joy in the rival camps. The two fleets instead of falling upon each other in deadly combat, as they would inevitably have done in the absence

of an arrangement, celebrated a sort of lovefeast in which congratulations were exchanged over copious libations and mutual pledges were given of the introduction of an era of good fellowship and general contentment. But it was a case of "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." The diplomats had devised cunningly, but they had not reckoned with the one element which was all important—human nature. On each side the Treaty was accepted with reservations, which doomed it to failure at the outset. The Dutch, represented by the implacable Coen, kept in the back of their mind their old resolve to monopolize the trade; the English entered upon the new era with all their ancient determination to carve out for themselves an independent position in the Eastern seas. Nothing, in fact, had really been altered but in the world of make-believe which diplomacy has marked out as her special province.

Almost before the smoke of the salutes which greeted the signing of the Treaty had died away dissensions had arisen between the English and the Dutch representatives at Batavia over the interpretation of the clauses of the Treaty. There were no doubt faults on both sides. The Dutch were exacting; the English were laggard in meeting their responsibilities; each sought to drive to the fullest limit the conditions which seemed in its favour without reference to the balancing requirements of the instrument. Coen's influence, too, counted for much in the darkening of counsel. His spirit is well illustrated in the instructions he left to General Carpentier, his successor, when he handed over the reins of government in 1623. He told Carpentier to "maintain carefully the sovereignty and highest jurisdiction" of the Dutch in the

Eastern seas "without sharing or suffering the English or any other to encroach thereupon." "Trust them not any more than open enemies," he wrote, "and give no way to the shortening of the sovereignty and common good, nor of the respect, reputation and countenance of the same, not weighing too scrupulously what may fall out." The Dutch policy, in fine, must be what it always had been, to exclude its rivals absolutely from any real participation in the trade of the Eastern islands.

Thus it was that all over this part of the East wherever the two races were in contact there was in spite of the Treaty friction and distrust, and as time wore on a rapidly widening alienation verging at points on open hostility.

When the fateful year 1623 dawned the English had scattered about the islands a number of small factories, eking out a precarious existence on the slender resources provided by the Company. The principal establishment was at the capital of Amboina, the headquarters of the Dutch Government and the chief seat of the spice trade. On the same island, at Hitoe and Larica, were branch agencies, while on the adjacent large island of Ceram were factories at Cambello and Luhu. They were all miserably equipped—it would seem almost from the correspondence of the time that they were in the last stages of financial decadence. The question of abandonment, indeed, had been seriously discussed in the later months of 1622 and had apparently only been postponed until fuller advices could be received.

English interests at the period were in the principal charge of Gabriel Towerson, who figured in an earlier chapter of the narrative as the husband of Mrs. Hawkins, the enterprising Armenian lady of Agra. Towerson appears to

have parted from his wife in India, after an abortive attempt to trade privately there, and later to have settled down as one of the Company's representatives at Bantam. When he tōok up his duties at Amboina he had had almost twenty years' continuous service in the East and was one of the Company's most experienced officials. The impression we gather of him from the records is that of an easy-going free-living Englishman who was not at all of the material of which dangerous innovators are made. He evidently, from his letters, shared to the full his countrymen's distrust and dislike of Dutch methods. But that he bore no malice—that he even had no feeling of actual antagonism to his rivals is shown by a request he preferred to his superiors at Batavia that they should recognize the good offices of the Dutch Governor, Herman Van Speult, in providing the English with a house to reside in at Amboina, by making him a present. This suggestion, put forward as late as the closing days of 1622, came to nothing because the English Council thought that Towerson had made too much of the "dissembled friendship" of Van Speult who was designated "a subtle man." But the mere fact that the proposal was made is of great significance in view of what was to follow.

Van Speult, the Dutch Governor, was an official trained in the school of Coen, and, indeed, directly appointed by him for the special service of safeguarding the sanctity of the Dutch monopoly in the Eastern Islands. He was a worthy disciple of the great creator of Dutch ascendancy. In him were united those dour qualities which have made the Hollander in all periods so formidable a foe. Stern of visage and taciturn of disposition his whole energies were absorbed in the task which patriotic duty had im-

posed upon him. As the English factors at Batavia had said, he was "a subtle man," and like most men of that stamp he was inordinately suspicious. Seated in the isolation of his official residence his jaundiced eyes had visions of risings and dark conspiracies of which his government was the object. Not, however, that he was without sound reason for distrust of the outwardly peaceful horizon. From the remoter islands with every ship must have come warnings of native discontent mingled with definite news of sinister meetings in woods and of assassinations and other tragic happenings traceable to political unrest. The whole atmosphere, indeed, was charged with a note of disaffection which vibrated painfully upon the nerves of Van Speult and his brother officials.

Turn we now from the chief personalities in this drama of Amboina with which we are about to deal to the setting given to it. By way of contrast to the gloom of the tragedy nothing could have been more impressive than this. Captain Fitzherbert, who visited the place just before the occurrence, in a letter home said, "Amboina sitteth as a Queen between the Isles of Banda and the Moluccas. She is beautified with the fruits of several factories and dearly beloved of the Dutch." That sailor's impression vividly suggests the natural charms of this famous island. Over it all is the glamour of the East in its most fascinating form. A placid opalescent sea washes a palm-fringed shore, from which rise lofty verdure-clad hills suffused in the violet haze of the strong tropical sun, In the waters around like satellites about a star of the first magnitude are other isles equally beautiful though not so favoured in situation.

The capital is placed on the half of the island known as

Leytimor, in such a position that it looks out upon the coast of the second and larger section designated Hitoe. Its main feature is a strong fortification called Fort Victoria, with solid masonry ramparts and bastions, and based on one side by the sea. In this castle, as it was termed, was in the early seventeenth century the Governor's residence and the principal headquarter establishments of the Government with a considerable garrison of Dutch troops. So enormous was the strength of the position that it could have been held almost independently even without the support of the shipping that was nearly always in the roads against any enemy that could be brought against it.

The actual tragedy of Amboina opened with dramatic fitness with a very simple scene. One evening as the garrison were at prayers a Japanese mercenary in the employ of the Dutch, wandering apparently aimlessly about the castle, on the ramparts came upon a young Dutch soldier acting as sentinel. Accosting him he asked how many soldiers there were in the garrison and how often the guards were relieved. There was nothing very extraordinary about the questions, the answers to which presumably could have been supplied by a little observation. But the Japanese had the previous evening made precisely the same inquiries; and, moreover, he had passed on to a portion of the fortifications which was forbidden ground to him as a private soldier. What, perhaps, was worse than these indiscretions was that he and his countrymen had for some time past fraternized overmuch with the Englishmen. Suspicion, consequently, fastened so strongly upon him that orders were given for his arrest.

The Japanese was, or professed himself to be, greatly surprised at the result of his evening ramble. His answer to the inquiries of the council before whom he was brought was that his questions had been prompted by mere curiosity—"without any malicious intentions." This reply, though a natural one, was deemed so unsatisfactory that, in accordance with the established practice of that barbaric judicial age, it was decided to put the man to the torture. He is said in the official Dutch record to have "endured pretty long," but ultimately under the extreme pain his stoicism broke down and he "confessed." His first statement was a bald one to the effect that the Japanese had resolved to make themselves masters of the castle. It was probably the first invention that came into his agonized mind. Instead of saving him from further unwelcome attentions it only stimulated the unholy zeal of his examiners. Once more the terrors of the torture chamber were exposed. Then, unable to bear the situation longer he declared that the English were his accomplices and that he had acted at the direct instigation of another Japanese, Cevice Michick by name, who had originally been in the pay of the English Company, but was now in the Dutch service.

"I was extremely surprised when I heard of this conspiracy," wrote Van Speult in his dispatch dealing with the episode. Well he might have been. The Japanese were an insignificant element of the population; the English were even less numerous—a mere handful scattered about the islands in positions which prohibited close communication. The ever present dread of revolt, however, lent a powerful stimulus to the official Dutch imagination. Van Speult saw things in a distorted perspective

which magnified these trivial bodies of aliens into a potentially powerful combination capable of dire mischief to the Government. He acted as if the danger were imminent. The prisoner was placed in close confinement and double guards were everywhere established. Meanwhile, the other Japanese soldiers, twelve in number, were brought into the castle and disarmed.

Next attention was turned to the English. The staff of the English factory lived in quarters in the town some little distance off. But it so happened that at the time there was in confinement in the castle one of the number, Abel Price by name, who had got himself into trouble by setting fire to a Dutchman's house when intoxicated. Price is described in the records as a "Chirurgeon," and presumably was a man of education though evidently not of exalted morals. The council had him brought before them to see what light he could throw upon this conspiracy which had been so providentially brought to light.

Price, dragged forth from his dungeon possibly with the effects of alcoholic excess still upon him, cut a poor figure. He "after little or no torture," to adopt the curious phraseology of the Dutch record, "instantly confessed, saying that on New Year's Day (their style) Captain Towerson had called them together, viz. the English merchants and the other officers, and first had had them take their oath of secrecy and faithfulness on their Bible. After this he pointed out to them that their nation was greatly troubled by us and treated unjustly, and was very little respected; for which he thought to revenge himself. If they would help him and assist him faithfully, he knew how to render himself master of the castle, to which some of them made objections, saying their power was

too small. On which the said Captain Towerson replied that he had already persuaded the Japanese and others and they were willing to assist him. He would not (he said) have want of people for all of them were willing. Moreover the said Price confessed he had been used voluntarily to persuade the Japanese and others, and that the Japanese to the number of twelve at the time the plot would have been acted upon, would first have murdered the guard and the governor if he was there; and then Captain Towerson and the merchants and all their people (whom he would have ordered from the factory for that purpose) would have come to the rescue. . . . They also agreed that all Dutchmen who would not agree with them should be murdered. The money and merchandise of the Company they would have divided amongst each other."

Such was the statement which was extorted from this poor feckless creature after "little or no torture." It was a preposterous story on the face of it. A score of English without arms, without ships, without military organization of any kind, with the aid of a dozen Japanese were to capture the great Dutch stronghold with its substantial garrison, subvert the entire Dutch power, and in the end divide amongst themselves as spoils of war the property of a strong mercantile organization which at the time was in intimate alliance with their own Company! The only possible way in which such a scheme could have been made feasible was by the association of a wide reaching native rebellion with the conspiracy, and even then it would have been a most desperate venture.

Dutch fears, however, saw in the concocted nonsense a full confirmation of their own excited imaginings. Orders

were forthwith issued for the apprehension of the whole of the English within the jurisdiction of the Government. Towerson was first seized at the English factory and kept a prisoner there. The other members of the staff, John Beomont, Edward Collings, Emanuel Thomson, Wm. Webber, Ephraim Ramsey, Timothy Johnson, John Fardo and Robert Brown, were sent on board the Dutch ship in the roads. Afterwards Samuel Coulson, John Clark and George Sharrock who were at Hitoe and Wm. Griggs and John Sadler, who were at Larica, were brought in. Finally, the party was completed by the addition of John Powle, John Wetherall and Thomas Ladbrook who had charge of the factory at Cambello.

The Dutch net had been cast so wide as to include every single representative of the English nation, however mean his status. For example, Fardo and Sadler were butlers and Brown was a tailor, while Ramsey and Webber were clerks. If we are to accept as accurate the descriptions given in the Dutch records the unfortunate company was thoroughly representative of the various parts of the kingdom. Collings came from London, Beomont from Berkshire, Griggs from Bedfordshire, Webber from Devon, Coulson from Newcastle, Wetherall from Rutland. Price, as may be surmised, was a Welshman, and Brown and Ramsey hailed from Scotland—rather curiously as there were few Scotchmen in the East India Company's service in these early days, though a century later they were very numerous.

It was probably without serious misgiving that the prisoners faced their confinement. How little they suspected the fate that was preparing for them is shown by the well attested circumstance that during the examina-

tion of the Japanese they visited the castle as usual, hearing probably from rumour with interest but without concern for themselves of the hard lot of the Japanese. They had, however, not long to wait for the revelation of their true position. Even before the last batch of prisoners had been brought in the examination had commenced with all its awful adjuncts.

The first to be called before the council were John Beomont and Timothy Johnson. With a refinement of cruelty Beomont was left with a guard in the hall while his companion was taken into the examination room. His feelings may be imagined when a little later he heard Johnson "cry out pitifully, then to be quiet for a little while, then to be loud again." What had happened was that Johnson had at the outset denied all knowledge of any conspiracy, in spite of the torture, and had been confronted with Price still without eliciting any confession. Thereupon Price was removed and the torture again applied. "At last," as the pathetic English story says, "after he had been an hour under the second examination he was brought forth wailing and lamenting all wet and cruelly burnt in divers parts of his body, and so laid aside in a by place in the hall with a soldier to watch him so that he should speak to nobody."

From the account given in the famous pamphlet prepared by the East India Company to secure redress for the terrible wrongs inflicted at this time, the torture was of two kinds. There was first the water ordeal. For this a prisoner was tied with arms and legs extended on a wooden frame and a cloth was bound round his head so as to form a loop about the mouth. Then water was slowly poured from above on to the cloth in such fashion that the victim

was compelled to swallow the fluid. The process after a time produced distension of the body and caused exquisite pain. If this method was not sufficient to bring the prisoner to a proper state of mind the second and more drastic operation was introduced. This took the form of the application of a lighted candle under the armpits, upon the soles of the feet and the palms of the hand. The agony, needless to say, was excruciating and the torture rarely failed of its purpose.

Emanuel Thomson was the next victim after Johnson to suffer. He was comparatively an old man—his age is given as 51—but his grey hairs did not save him from the unspeakable cruelties of "the Chamber of Horrors" as it was appropriately styled. For over an hour and half he suffered the agonies of the tests before he would "confess" sufficiently to satisfy his examiners. Beomont, who meantime had been shivering in apprehension in the hall, was now brought in. With "deep oaths and protestations of innocence" he was made fast for the ordeal, and then the judges having had their fill apparently of their diabolical work ordered him to be released with the observation that they would spare him for a day or two because he was an old man.

The following day, which was a Sunday, the examination was resumed. Brown, the first to be summoned, assented to all that was asked of him without the application of the torture. He was succeeded by Collings, who gave the inquisitors more trouble. When he had been tied up for the water test his heart momentarily failed him and he promised to confess if let down. But when he had been released he "again vowed and protested his innocency," stating that as he knew that they would by torture "make

him confess anything though never so false they should do him a great favour by telling him what they would have him say and he would speak it to avoid the torture."

"The fiscal whereupon said: 'What, do you mock us!' and bade 'Up with him again,' and so gave him the torment of water which he not being able to endure prayed to be let down again to his confession. Then he devised a little with himself and told them that about two months and a half before himself, Thomson, Johnson, Brown and Fardo had plotted with the help of the Japans to surprise the castle.

"Here he was interrupted by the fiscal and asked whether Towerson were not of the conspiracy. He answered 'No.'

"'You lie,' said the fiscal. 'Did he not call you to him and tell you that those daily abuses of the Dutch had caused him to think a plot and that he wanted nothing but your consent and service?'

"Then said a Dutch merchant—one John Joost—that sat by: 'Did you not all swear upon the Bible to be secret to him?'

"Collings answered with great oaths that he knew nothing of any such matter. Then they made him fast again. Whereupon he then said all was true that they had spoken. Then the fiscal asked him whether the English in the rest of the factories were not concerned of the plot. He answered 'No.' The fiscal then asked him whether the president of the English at Jakatra (Batavia) or Welden, agent, in Banda, were not plotters or privy to the business. Again he answered 'No.'

"Then the fiscal asked him by what means the Japans should have executed their purpose. Whereat when Col-

lings stood staggering and devising of some probable fiction the fiscal holpe him and said: 'Should not two Japans have gone to each point of the castle and two to the governor's chamber door and when the hurly burly had bin without and the governor coming to see what was the matter the Japaners would have killed him?'"

Eventually Collings agreed to all that was asked and was dismissed, "and very glad to come clear of his torture though with certain belief that he should die for his confession."

Upon Coulson fell the next summons, and when after the usual process he had been brought out "weeping, lamenting and protesting his innocency," Clark was put to the torture. He proved the most resolute of the party. After he had been plied with water "till his body was swolne twice or thrice as big as before, his cheeks like great bladders and his eyes staring and strutting out beyond his forehead" and still refused to speak, the fiscal and his tormenters "reviled him saying that he was the devil and no man, or surely was a witch, or at least had some charm about him or was enchanted that he should bear so much." Having thus vented their feelings upon the wretched man, they "cut off his hair very short as supposing he had some witchcraft hidden therein."

Subsequently they again applied the torture, burning him with candles "until his inwards might evidently be seen," when at length, "wearied and overcome with the torments he answered 'Yea' to whatsoever they asked." At length, "having martyred this pore man, they sent him out with four blacks who carried him between them to a dungeon where he lay for five or six days without a surgeon to dress his wounds."

This concluded "the Saboth Day's work," but the next morning the inquisitors were at their dreadful operations again. Beomont was one of the first to suffer. He was "triced up and drenched with water till his inwards were ready to crack." Like the rest he could not withstand the terrible argument employed. "He answered affirmatively to all the Fiscal's interrogatories."

As soon as the examination of all the prisoners was complete Towerson was called in "deeply protesting his innocence." Coulson was brought to confront him and there was a painful moment of silence. At length on being told that he would be taken to the torture again if he did not speak Coulson "coldly re-affirmed" his confession. Griggs and Fardo were next ushered in. A dramatic scene followed. Towerson "seriously charged them as they should answer at the dreadful day of Judgment they should speak nothing but the truth. Both of them instantly fell down on their knees, praying him for God's sake to forgive them and saying further openly before them all that whatsoever they had confessed was false and spoken only to avoid torment." Upon this the fiscal threatened them again with the torture, with the inevitable result that the poor fellows "affirmed their former confessions to be true."

When Coulson was required to sign his confession he asked the fiscal "upon whose head he thought the sinne would be, whether upon his that was constrained to confess what was false or upon the constrainers?" The fiscal after a little pause upon this question went to the governor then in another room and anon returning told Coulson he must subscribe, at which he did yet withal make this protest:—

"'Well,' quoth he, 'you make me accuse myself and

others of that which is false as God is true: for God is my witness, I am as innocent as the child new borne.' "

At length the examinations were complete. The version given of them is the English one, but there is no reason to doubt its substantial accuracy. Though afterwards Van Speult and his associates challenged the truth of the allegations that the confessions were extorted by torture they admitted that torture was used in a minor degree and the circumstance, in modern eyes at least, will be held to vitiate the whole proceedings more especially as even in the Dutch records there is not a scintilla of direct evidence, apart from the confessions, to bring guilt home to the prisoners. It is true that Van Speult at a later period spoke of documentary evidence in his possession connecting Towerson with the conspiracy, but this as far as can be ascertained was never produced. Nor is it likely that it existed, for if certain proofs had been available they would assuredly have been forthcoming when the justice of the procedure was violently challenged as it was at a subsequent stage.

There is a possibility that the details of the torture have been painted in a little too lurid colours. Men labouring under a great sense of wrong as the survivors were were not likely to exercise much restraint in relating personal experiences of a painful kind. As far as the use of torture was concerned it must, too, be remembered that such was not an uncommon feature of judicial procedure in that period. Only a few years before the scenes described in the Amboina Chamber of Horrors, Guido Fawkes, the principal conspirator in the Gunpowder Plot, had been placed upon the rack to extort that confession which the curious visitor to the Record Office in London inspects

with other historic documents. The reader also will remember that torture was even practised in cases of theft on the vessels of the English East India Company. In fact the system was too general to make any specific instance a certain indication of unbridled brutality on the part of those who practised it. Still, remembering in what relation the English stood to the Dutch, recalling the age of several of them and having regard also to the source from whence the accusations against them emanated, it must be considered that these cruelties at Amboina carried with them a sense of indelible infamy.

CHAPTER XV

The Last Scene of All

Condemnation of the Amboina prisoners—Reprieve of two of the English—A fateful lottery—The condemned Englishmen refused the Sacrament—They solemnly renew their protestations of innocence—The last night passed in prayer and praise—A touching memorial of the occasion—The day of execution—Meeting between the English and the Japanese prisoners—Bearing of the English in their last moments—The execution—Strange happenings—Effect produced in England by the episode—A belated settlement—What was "the Massacre of Amboina"?—The English withdraw from the Eastern Islands

ON February 25, 1623 (old style), the unfortunate prisoners were assembled in the great hall of the castle of Amboina to receive the inevitable condemnation. None of the gloomy accessories of justice were wanting to lend impressiveness to the occasion. At the head of the chamber sat at a massive table Van Speult and the members of his council in full uniform. The Fiscal, De Bruyne, who had taken such a prominent and sinister part in the examinations, was there also, with the Dutch chaplain, in the severe habiliments of his order. On all sides were armed soldiers in the buff uniforms of Holland's greatest mercantile association. On the fringes of the crowd were probably a few islanders holding menial offices, who looked with curious questioning eyes upon this spectacle of the members of one European race sitting in judgment upon the representatives of another Western nationality.

There was a brevity about the final proceedings consist-

ent with the settled belief with which the judges had from the first pursued the investigations. De Bruyne, to follow the Dutch record, "stated his suit and drew his conclusion." It is almost unnecessary to say what that conclusion was. The Fiscal was an apt tool of an infamous system under which men could be done to death with due judicial forms. Torquemada was not more indefatigable in scenting out a heretic than De Bruyne was in discovering a conspirator. To his own satisfaction he brought home guilt to all the prisoners save four of the least important of them, viz., Powle, Ramsey, Sadler and Ladbrook. It now only remained for the Court to pass sentence. Before this was done, we are told, "prayers were said to the Lord that He might govern their (the Council's) hearts in this gloomy consultation and that He might inspire them only with equity and justice"—hollow words after such "equity and justice" as had been dealt out to the unfortunate prisoners.

With quivering lips and blenched faces Towerson and his companions listened to the declaration which sealed their fate. Towerson himself was condemned to be decapitated and quartered, and his head to be hung on a post as a warning to other evil-doers. His fellow captives were sentenced to simple decapitation. In every instance the victim's private property was ordered to be confiscated—an idle injunction, for the poor fellows had so little to leave that the Dutch were afterwards content that the surviving English should divide their hapless comrades' possessions amongst themselves.

Before the prisoners were removed, it occurred to the Council that the wholesale execution of the English would give rise to inconvenience by throwing upon them the

onus of administering the affairs of the English factory. They, therefore, resolved to reprieve two of the prisoners to look after the Company's interests. Beomont, who had a firm friend at Court in the person of a Dutch merchant, was released on the latter's earnest intercession. For the other pardon it was settled that Coulson, Thomson and Collings should draw lots. In due course the trio were brought together for the fateful purpose. They prepared themselves for the ordeal by devoutly kneeling in prayer. Then uprising, with calm faces they submitted themselves to the arbitrament of the lottery box. Upon Collings fell the selection of the paper which conferred life and liberty. He bore himself, we may be sure from what had passed previously, with becoming humility; equally may we be confident that the other two resigned themselves to their fate without unmanly repining.

After condemnation the prisoners, with the exception of Towerson, were removed to a room in the Castle, where they were left to pass the night by themselves. They were visited there by the Dutch ministers, who, "telling them how short a time they had to live, admonished and exhorted them to make their true confessions, for (they said) it was a dangerous and desperate thing to dissemble at such a time." The prisoners in the most earnest language reasserted their innocence and asked the ministers to administer the Sacrament to them—"as a seal of the forgiveness of their sinnes and withall thereby to confirme their last profession of their innocencie." "But," says the narrative, "this would by no means be granted."

Upon this Coulson, who throughout these dread last hours seems to have played the part of leader, asked the reverend visitors the following question—

"You manifest unto us the danger of dissimulation in this case. But tell us, if we suffer guiltlesse, being otherwise also true believers in Jesus Christ, what shall be our reward?"

The answer came from the principal minister—

"By how much the cleerer you are, soe much the more glorious shall be your resurrection."

"With that word Coulson started up, embraced the preacher and gave him his purse with such money as hee had in it, saying—

"'Domine, God bless you. Tell the Governor I freely forgive him; and I entreat you to exhort him to repent of this bloody tragedy wrought upon us poor innocent souls.'

"Here all the rest of the Englishmen signified their assent to this speech.

"Then spake John Fardo to the rest in presence of the ministers, as followeth—

"'My countrymen and brethren that are heere with mee condemned to dye, I charge you all as you will answer it at God's Judgment Seat if any of you bee guilty of this matter, whereof we are condemned, discharge your consciences and confesse the truth for satisfaction of the world.'

"Hereupon Samuel Coulson spake with a loud voyce, saying—

"According to my innocency in this treason so, Lord, pardon all my sinnes, and if I be guiltie thereof, more or lesse, let me never be partaker of Thy heavenly joys.'

"At which words every one of the rest cryed out—

"'Amen for me, amen for me, good Lord!'

"This done, each of them knowing whom he had accused, went one to another begging forgiveness for their false

accusation, being roung from them by the pains or feare of torture. And they all freely forgave one another: for none had bene so falsely accused but he himself had accused another as falsely."

Moved by the sufferings of the condemned, the good-natured Dutch guard offered them wine, with the suggestion that they should drown their sorrows in drink as the Dutch, in similar cases, were, he said, accustomed to do. But the offer was gratefully but emphatically rejected. Face to face with death the Englishmen were in no mood to stain their last hours with a drunken orgy. Though rude men who, in most cases, had led dissolute lives, they had, deep down in their natures, a strong strain of religious feeling. They preferred, therefore, to pass the night with devotional exercises. Thus, as the sentry kept his solitary vigil outside, there was borne upon his ears in the silence of the tropical night, the deep bass voices of the prisoners as in mournful cadence they sang the psalms appropriate to their sad condition.

A touching memorial of that solemn night of prayer and praise is preserved amongst the Dutch national archives at the State Record Office at the Hague. It is a small black-covered volume containing, bound together, "The Psalms of David in Meeter," and "The Catechisme," both bearing the imprint, "Edinburgh, printed by Andro Hart, 1611," It is the identical book used on the occasion by Samuel Coulson. Convincing evidence of this is supplied by certain writings, bearing Coulson's signature, which appear in the blank pages of the volume. These include an earnest declaration of the writer's innocence. It was one of several declarations to the same effect which were inscribed in different books by the prisoners. One of the

fullest, which was written on March 5 by Coulson "aboard the *Rotterdam* lying in irons," is to this effect :—

"Understand that I, Samuel Coulson, late factor of Hitto, was apprehended for suspicion of conspiracy; and for anything I know must die for it: wherefore having no meanes to make my innocency knowne, have writ in this book, hoping some good Englishman will see it. I doe hereupon my salvation, as I hope by His death and passion to have redemption for my sinnes, that I am cleere of all such conspiracy: neither do I know any Englishman guilty thereof, nor other creature in the world. As this is true, God bless me—Samuel Coulson."

Towerson figures little in these moving narratives of the Amboina prisoners, doubtless because of his isolation. But that he suffered with the rest is clear from an account of a visit paid by Beomont to him on the morning of execution. Beomont " found him sitting in a chamber all alone in a most miserable condition, the wounds of his torture bound up. . . . He took Beomont by the hand and prayed him when he came into England to do his duty to the Honble. Company, his master, to Mr. Robinson, and to his brother Billingsley, and to certify them of his innocence, 'which,' said he, 'you yourself know well enough.'"

At length the dread hour of execution arrived. The beat of drum and the tramp of soldiers re-echoing through the streets from early morning had sent throughout the town an irresistible summons to witness the deed of horror about to be perpetrated. All about the execution ground, outside the line kept by the military, was a vast crowd of Amboinese, silent and awed, and yet not devoid of that brilliancy of colouring which is so characteristic of the Oriental popular gathering. There must have been amongst

them many islanders from without, men who had known and fought with Courthope and with whose pity mingled a fierce feeling of anger and bitter disappointment at the era of hopeless subjection which the approaching execution seemed so inexorably to usher in.

Meanwhile, in the great hall of the castle all the prisoners were assembled for the grim pageantry which was to precede the final awful rites. At the door of the chamber were "the quit and pardoned," to whom with streaming eyes and broken voices the prisoners tendered their last farewells. Standing now on the threshold of the other world the condemned once more affirmed their innocence, and solemnly charged their more fortunate colleagues "to bear witnesse to their friends in England . . . that they died not traitors, but so many innocents merely murdered by the Hollanders, whome they prayed God to forgive their blood-thirstinesse and to have mercy upon their own soules."

On one side of the hall, curious spectators of this farewell scene, were the Japanese prisoners, who with the stolidity of their race stood quietly awaiting their doom. When the English prisoners were brought near to them the Japanese in terms of mingled surprise and reproach said—

"'O you Englishmen, where did wee ever in our lives eat with you, talk with you, or (to our remembrance) see you?'

"The Englishmen replied: 'Why, then, have you accused us?'"

Then, says the record, "The poore men, perceiving they were made believe each had accused others before they had so done, indeed, showed them their tortured bodies and said—

"'If a stone were thus burnt, would it not change his nature? How much more we that are flesh and blood?'"

To such reasoning there could be no reply. The English prisoners had tasted too deeply the bitter pangs of the torture chamber, had themselves offended too much against truth under the infernal stimulus applied, to be able to raise their voices in censure. So with friendly words of farewell they passed on.

Outside the hall was an open space, overlooked by the windows of the castle, and a kind of gallery communicating with the official quarters. When all the prisoners had been collected at this point an official appeared in the gallery and read out in due form the sentence which had been passed by the Council. Thereafter a procession was formed to conduct the prisoners to the scaffold. From motives of policy, doubtless, the route taken was a long and circuitous one which led through the town. Escorted by a strong military guard the melancholy *cortège* slowly made its way through lines of soldiery to the execution ground.

In their last moments the condemned Englishmen showed themselves worthy of their race. Armed with the consciousness of innocence and strengthened spiritually by their night of devotion, they looked composedly outwards towards the unseen. Coulson, now, as ever, a leader, drew from his breast a paper on which he had written a prayer suitable to the occasion with, at its conclusion, a strong declaration of innocence. In a loud, firm voice which penetrated far in the still morning air he read the simple sentences in which, on behalf of himself and his fellow-prisoners, he invoked the favour of the Deity in this awful crisis. When the final words of supplication had died away he cast the paper into the air, it fluttered

for a moment overhead and then was taken possession of by an official at whose feet it fell.

In a pause which followed the prayer, Emanuel Thomson, speaking so as to be heard some distance, solemnly declared that he was sure that God would show some sign of their innocence.

The executioner now began his bloody work. As each man stepped forward unflinchingly to the block, he affirmed in language which varied little that he was utterly guiltless in the matter for which he was to die. "And so, one by one, with great cheerfulness, they suffered the fatal stroke."

A strange distinction was made in Towerson's case. Prior to his execution there was placed about the block a large piece of black velvet. Presumably this was done in deference to his superior rank, but it is one of the curiosities of a remarkable episode that the English East India Company was afterwards, in a bill of charges, debited with the value of this material on the ground that the bloodstains upon it had rendered it unserviceable.

In keeping with this fastidious deference to rank, Towerson was buried in a special grave. A common tomb sheltered the remains of the nine other unfortunate Englishmen. Before the work of interment was completed, indeed, before the execution was barely over, a great darkness came on and a storm swept over Amboina, driving the shipping ashore and doing immense damage to property. The next day, a wretched Englishman who had testified against his fellows falsely was found on the condemned men's grave weeping and behaving strangely. He was led away and died two days later raving mad. Almost simultaneously there broke out on the island a

terrible pestilence which carried off hundreds of victims before it was stayed. The surviving Englishmen, recalling Thomson's dying words, saw in these visitations signs of the Divine wrath at the doing to death of their innocent fellow-countrymen. Even the superstitious natives traced a connexion between the misfortunes which overwhelmed them and the ruthless act which had practically extirpated the English. Their sense of justice, dulled though it was by ages of oppression, was sufficiently strong to see in the procedure which had encompassed the deaths of Towerson and his associates a degree of turpitude which called aloud to heaven for vengeance. Hence it was that the days following the execution were a period of gloom in Amboina for the islanders, and maybe for Van Speult and his associates a time of dark communings and remorse.

When in due course the news of the tragedy reached Batavia the little English colony there were fired with righteous indignation. The president of the factory immediately drew up a protest against Van Speult's "presumptuous proceedings" in "imprisoning, torturing, condemning and bloodily executing his Majesty's subjects," and "in confiscating their goods in direct violation of the Treaty, whereby the King was disgraced and dishonoured and the English nation scandalized."

Carpentier, the Dutch Governor-General, treated the protest somewhat coolly, but in his despatches home he showed a full appreciation of the gravity of the issue that had been raised. While he expressed belief in the existence of a conspiracy, he condemned strongly the methods of the trial. De Bruyne was selected for special censure. He "called himself a lawyer and had been taken into the Company's service as such," but he "should have shown

better judgment in the affair." The Council had left too much to him and apparently had not dared to add anything to the documents that he had prepared. "We think," Carpentier went on to say in some significant sentences, "the rigour of justice should have been mitigated somewhat with Dutch clemency (with consideration to a nation who is our neighbour), especially if such could be done without prejudice to the state and the dignity of justice, as we think could have been done here." "It is," the Governor-General concluded impressively, "a bad war where all remain."

Months afterwards, when the facts of "the Massacre" were known in England, the country was stirred to its depths. The Lords of the Privy Council were moved to tears at the relation of the sufferings of the unhappy Englishmen. The King, though not usually given to emotion, "took it very much to heart." Even those who wished well to the Dutch "could not hear or speak of it without indignation," while the facts were so damning that "none in the Assembly of the States General (in Holland) approved the cruel tortures of the bloody executions." "For my part," wrote Chamberlain, the London historian, to Carleton, the English ambassador at the Hague, "if there were no wiser than I, we should stay or arrest the first Indian ship that comes in our way and hang up upon Dover cliffs as many as we should find faulty or actors in this business and then dispute the matter afterwards: for there is no other course to be held with such manner of men, as neither regard law nor justice, nor any other respect of equity or humanity, but only make gain their God."

The directors of the East India Company took, natur-

ally, a very grave view of the situation. They held that it would be impossible for them to continue their trade "except the Dutch make real restitution for damages, execute justice upon those who had in so great fury and tyranny tortured and slain the English, and give security for the future." These views were in due course laid formally before the King, who promised to secure redress, and, meanwhile, strongly advised the Company in no circumstances to abandon its trade.

James's pledge to the Company came to little. He may have honestly intended to uphold the righteous demands for the wiping out of a foul stain upon the country's honour, but when the first fever of indignation had worn out he allowed the question to drop into a diplomatic groove which led it ultimately into a morass of fruitless negotiations. It was suspected at the time, probably with good reason, that the Duke of Buckingham, the King's favourite minister, was bought over to the Dutch interest by enormous bribes, which the Dutch Company was well able to pay. Whether that was the case or not, the years slipped by without any satisfaction being given for the heinous act of the government of Amboina. Not until the days of the Commonwealth was the long outstanding account adjusted. Then, with the aid of Cromwell's strong arm, the Dutch East Company was forced to make amends by the Treaty of Westminster, concluded in 1658, for the bitter wrongs perpetrated thirty-five years previously. Meanwhile, most of the chief actors in the tragedy had passed to their rest. Van Speult died at Surat a few years after the occurrences at Amboina, and his remains were interred in the Dutch graveyard there in what, strange irony of fate, is to-day British soil.

What was the Tragedy of Amboina? Was it, as the English of the time asserted, a massacre, under judicial forms, of innocent trade rivals for sordid motives? Or was it, as the Dutch contended, an act of justice perpetrated upon a body of unscrupulous conspirators? It is not difficult to answer the questions. Time has unlocked many of the official secrets of that period and with the documentary evidence available much is made clear which two or three centuries ago was involved in obscurity. The truth would appear to lie between the two extremes. The Dutch were not bloodthirsty murderers venting their private vengeance on unoffending men: nor were they patterns of justice meting out punishment to proved criminals. They were simply men inspired by unholy zeal for a bad cause. They sincerely believed that a conspiracy was afoot against them and that the Englishmen were implicated in it. Having this fixed idea in their mind they worked upon it with the unscrupulous energy of the type of police official who makes his evidence fit the theory he has formed of a crime. When, however, we have said this much in their favour we have said all. Nothing can extenuate the horrible brutality with which the so-called evidence was got together, or the ruthless—and even from the extreme standpoint of Dutch policy—unnecessary severity with which the course of justice was directed. The whole business was a judicial crime of the blackest and most infamous type—one which even after three centuries cannot be regarded without a feeling of indignation.

This sombre episode of Amboina, besides putting a period to the lives of Towerson and his associates, set a decisive limit to the ambitions of the English to play a

leading part in the trade of the Eastern islands. From this time forward the history of the English factories in the Archipelago is one long series of disappointments. Driven from one spot after another by their remorseless rivals, the English sunk lower and lower in the scale of influence until they were ousted entirely from the region. There was a flicker of hope for them in 1658 when, under the Treaty of Westminster, Poolo Roon, the island which Courthope had defended so gallantly, was retroceded, but at the end of 1665 the Dutch re-occupied the position and gave the final blow to English claims in that quarter. At last in 1667 the sole remaining English factory in Bantam was closed by Dutch action, and with this culminating blow ended a phase of the East India Company's activities from which so much was once expected.

CHAPTER XVI

The English in the Persian Gulf

Portuguese supremacy in the Gulf challenged—Goa, the Portuguese capital in the East—Sir Robert Shirley, the Shah of Persia's ambassador—English open a trading factory in Persia—Shah Abbas's hatred of the Portuguese—His gift of Jask to the English—Ruy Freire de Andrade, the Portuguese commander, conducts a fleet to the Gulf—Portuguese ultimatum to the Shah—Action between the Portuguese and the English off Jask—English fleet under Captain Shilling drives off the Portuguese—English fleet under Captains Blyth and Weddell, assisted by a Persian land force, attacks and defeats Portuguese at Kishm—Baffin, the Arctic explorer, killed in the fight—Surrender of Ruy Freire—Ormuz attacked and occupied—Downfall of the Portuguese power in the Gulf

ALL the time that English and Dutch were contending in deadly rivalry in the Eastern Islands, the historic fight against the Portuguese had been proceeding practically without interruption. Though heavily beaten, with some of her best centres of trade captured, her commerce crippled and her prestige shattered, Portugal fought on with all the energy of despair. Driven out of the Eastern seas by Dutch ships she concentrated her resources on the defence of her possessions in India. These were still a splendid heritage worthy of a mighty effort. The capital, Goa, on the West coast, was "no mean city." It sheltered a large and opulent population drawn from every part of the East. The great Cathedral

of Bom Jesus with its magnificent shrine of St. Francis Xavier would not have disgraced a European capital, and it was only one of many superb religious structures of which the city could boast, for the Inquisition, then in the plenitude of its awful power, cast an unholy lustre over the settlement. Men in whose veins the most aristocratic blood of Portugal ran gave to the local society a distinction uncommon in an Eastern settlement. On all hands were evidences of refinement and luxury, and of the splendours of a powerful seat of government. Even to-day, when Goa is little more than a heap of mouldering ruins, it is possible to realize in the survivals of the past something of the dignified life which was once lived in this the earliest scene of European colonization in India. And Goa, of course, was only one of several important possessions which Portugal then owned in this region. In Southern India were Cochin and Cannanore and farther South was the beautiful island of Ceylon which the Portuguese dominated from strongly fortified bases at Colombo, Jaffnapatam and elsewhere. Away northward in the Persian gulf were Ormuz and Gombroon, the latter the modern Bunder Abbas, both centres which in their day had been the seats of a great trade. It is with the two last-named settlements that the narrative has now to deal.

At a very early period after their first visit to Surat, the English had turned their attention to the Persian Gulf trade. At that time Europe, owing to the glamour of old associations, entertained an exaggerated idea of the possibilities of the route through the Gulf as a channel for the prosecution of Eastern trade. Its historic past was certainly a great one. From a very remote era it had been used as one of the main ocean highways for the transit of

the produce of the East to the West. In the Middle Ages the Venetians had obtained their supplies of spices from vessels which had made their way up to the head of the Gulf and transferred them there either to caravans or to other craft which navigated the Euphrates to a point far in the interior easily accessible from the Mediterranean. The Portuguese when they went to the East took prompt measures to make themselves masters in a region which had so many famous traditions as a commercial centre. In the absence of effective rivalry at sea they were able to get into their own hands the entire overseas trade and to exercise a large control of the commerce of the whole of Southern Persia. When the English made their appearance in the Indian Ocean, Portuguese supremacy was unchallenged, and it seemed unchallengeable.

Fitch's narrative had thrown a good deal of light upon the position occupied by the Portuguese in the Persian Gulf, and other information had been gleaned from representatives of the Turkey Company who penetrated to Persia from Constantinople, but the actual inspirer of the East India Company's earliest Persian venture was probably Sir Robert Shirley or Sherley, a gentleman adventurer who for a good many years in the opening of the seventeenth century figured on the diplomatic stage in Europe as ambassador to Shah Abbas, then ruler of Persia.

Robert Shirley's career supplies a curious and interesting page in the history of the early English adventurers in the East. Like so many of his class, he was a scion of a noble English family who had been driven abroad to seek his fortune by a pure love of excitement and change. He had originally gone to Persia in the train of his brother, Anthony, who after a period of buccaneering in Portuguese

possessions in the Cape Verde Islands and the West Indies, had conducted an unofficial mission to the Shah with a view of enlisting the Shah's co-operation with the Christian princes against the Turk. Anthony's self-imposed mission had ended in failure, and he had returned to Europe in the earliest years of the seventeenth century, leaving his brother behind in the Shah's service. Robert Shirley was a man of resource, and soon won his way to favour by the measures he introduced for the reorganization of the Persian army on European lines. In 1607 he had practically adopted a Persian domicile by marrying the daughter of a Circassian noble who was one of the Shah's principal officers. Henceforward his interests were closely identified with those of his adopted country.

In 1608 Robert Shirley was employed by the Shah on a diplomatic mission to the Court of King James. His appearance in London in Persian costume with his wife also wearing Oriental dress, created a mild sensation. He had a friendly reception at Court, which is the more surprising as Anthony Shirley had given an immense deal of trouble by his unauthorized diplomatic exercises, and the name of Shirley consequently was one which had no very pleasing sound in official ears at the period. Not only was the King very gracious to him, but Prince Henry paid him special honour by standing godfather to the son born to the ambassador during his sojourn in England.

After a prolonged stay in his native country, Shirley returned to Persia in 1615, only to receive from his royal patron instructions for a fresh mission to Europe—to Portugal and Spain in the first instance and later to England. For nearly thirteen years he represented the Shah in Europe, and he then set his face once more towards

Persia, but on presenting himself at the Shah's Court he was told that the Shah had no further use for his services. Intensely mortified at his unfavourable reception, Shirley sickened and died. His remains were in the first instance buried under the doorstep of his house at Teheran, but at a subsequent period the body was exhumed and taken by his wife to Rome, where it was buried in the Church of Santa Maria della Scala, the convent attached to which she had entered on quitting the East.

In his picturesque way, Sir Robert Shirley was a veritable citizen of the world, but he always had a warm corner in his heart for his native land, and as often as opportunity offered without detriment to his own position pushed her interests. When Richard Steele, with a companion, John Crowther, was on his way through Persia to Europe from India in 1615, he procured for him a cordial reception from Shah Abbas, who readily granted a *firman* for trading purposes. It was not, however, until 1617, when the East India Company sent out Edward Connock as factor to develop the Persian trade, that any practical steps were taken to turn to account the favourable prepossessions which the Shah, through the influence of Shirley, had formed of the English.

Connock was well received by the Shah, who appears to have regarded him in the light of an ambassador from James I, an illusion which the enterprising merchant did nothing to dispel. At the interview at the palace after the inevitable letter from the monarch and the equally inevitable presents had been presented, Shah Abbas called for wine, and taking a deep draught from the large bowl which had been handed him, drank his Majesty's health, dropping upon his knee to emphasize the compliment. He after-

wards told Connock that he was welcome, that the King of England should be regarded as his elder brother, for he dearly esteemed his friendship, and that he would grant the English Jask, or any other port they might desire, with full freedom of trade. Finally an arrangement was completed by which the Shah contracted to deliver to the English from 1,000 to 3,000 bales of silk annually, at a price of from 6*s.* to 6*s.* 6*d.* per pound.

The curious blending of regality and commercial enterprise which is revealed in this transaction is typical of a state of affairs that prevailed throughout a great part of Asia at this period. In many countries the sovereign had an absolute monopoly of the trade, and it was death to any of their subjects to enter into independent commercial relations with foreigners. The system was almost universal in Further India and Indo-China, and though in India the lordly Mogul did not deign to soil his hands with actual trading operations, he was keenly alive, as we have seen, to the importance of keeping a tight hand on all commercial operations.

Shah Abbas's readiness to grant concessions to the English was prompted far more by his hatred of the Portuguese than by any genuine desire to assist Sir Robert Shirley's countrymen. Here, as elsewhere throughout the East, the Lusitanian yoke galled terribly. With their mastery of the sea, the Portuguese were able to set a rigid limit to Persian trade from the Gulf ports. They used their power with such ruthlessness that no vessel was able to enter or leave the ports in the Shah's territory without their licence. To all intents and purposes the coastal territory of the Shah was Portuguese, though they actually occupied only Ormuz and one or two other places in the Gulf.

The gift of Jask to the English in these circumstances was a somewhat interested piece of generosity. The Shah's obvious design in making it was to embroil the English with the Portuguese. He doubtless hoped that if the representatives of the two nations fell to fighting he might in the end come by his own again. Whatever his motive may have been, the effect of his favours to the English was precisely that indicated. The Portuguese took the alarm immediately they found that the East India Company was sending its ships to the Gulf. They foresaw in this new intrusion another and possibly a mortal blow to a trade which had already been reduced considerably from its former splendid proportions to almost insignificant dimensions. They accordingly nerved themselves for a big effort to oust the intruders.

In the spring of 1619 an expedition composed of five large ships was dispatched from Lisbon to the Gulf under the command of Ruy Freire de Andrade, a brave and capable commander who had done good service for his country. Information of the departure of the fleet was transmitted to India by the English Company with the consequence that the authorities at Surat sent a powerful force into the Gulf in 1619 for the safeguarding of their trade, a measure which served the immediate purpose of ensuring due protection to English interests that year.

Meanwhile, in Persia the plot was decidedly thickening. The Portuguese ambassador at his final audience of the Shah took up a line of studied insolence. He demanded firstly the restitution of Gombroon and other territory recently occupied by the Persians, claiming that they belonged to Ormuz, and secondly, the exclusion of all other European powers from Persian ports.

Shah Abbas was greatly incensed at the nature of the demands that were made upon him. With passionate gestures he tore up the letters of recall presented to him by the ambassador and roundly declared that instead of restoring what he had already taken, he would drive the Portuguese from their factory at Ormuz. To accentuate his contempt for the practical ultimatum which had been delivered to him, he gave orders forthwith for the preparation of a *firman* granting the sole trade in silks to the English. There was now but a step to be taken to get into the region of actual warfare.

Upon the English fell the first serious blow in the contest. In November, 1620, Captain Shilling arrived in Swally roads with two ships, the *London* and the *Roebuck*. Two other vessels of the same fleet, the *Hart* and the *Eagle*, had at an earlier period of the voyage been detached to proceed to the Gulf and were at the time well on their way to their destination. As soon as Shilling realized from the news which he gathered at Surat the danger which threatened from this division of his forces, he made all haste to follow the *Hart* and the *Eagle*. He came up with the ships in due course, and the reunited fleet made for Jask with the full determination of the commander to assert the English right to trade, even if he had to fight for it.

About the middle of December the Portuguese fleet was encountered off Jask, lying close in shore. Lack of wind delayed the engagement for a couple of days, and then a gallant, but unsuccessful, attempt was made to burn Ruy Freire's flagship. After this there was a lull in the operations, which lasted until December 28, when issue was joined in earnest. The brunt of the fight fell for a time upon the *London* and the *Hart*, the other two ships being becalmed

some distance away. In spite of the odds against them the two English ships held their position, and in the end, by a well-sustained cannonade, inflicted such severe punishment upon the enemy that they were put to flight. All four English ships joined in the chase, which was continued well into the evening when, as the supply of ammunition was running short, the order was given to return to Jask.

Honours decidedly rested with the English. A superior Portuguese fleet had been driven off and the way had been opened for English trade in circumstances which were calculated to impress the Persians with the superior fighting qualities of the new aspirant for commercial favours in the Shah's dominions. The victory, however, had not been won lightly. Amongst the wounded on the English side was Shilling, who early in the action received a bullet in the shoulder as he was directing operations from the half deck. He lingered for some days and then expired, to the great grief of his men, who recognized in him a skilful and kindly leader. The dead commander was given an imposing funeral at Jask. Thereafter the English fleet set sail for Surat.

At the close of 1621 another English fleet of five ships, under the joint command of Captains Blyth and Weddell, was navigating the waters of the Gulf. In the interval which had elapsed since the departure of Shilling's fleet the situation in Persia had markedly changed. The Persians, encouraged by the success of the English operations, had besieged Ormuz, and the Portuguese, in retaliation for Persian hostility, had laid waste the coast and burnt all Persian shipping that came in their way. On the whole the Portuguese, with their command of the sea, had, so far, a distinct advantage in the struggle.

Not unnaturally, in the circumstances the Persians hailed the advent of the English fleet with delight. Their hatred of the Portuguese was intense, and they realized that in the English they might obtain an ally whose assistance would be invaluable to them. Without loss of time they made overtures to the English commanders for co-operation, offering substantial inducements in the shape of trading concessions and backing their requests for assistance with the argument that as the fight with the Portuguese had been precipitated by the favour shown by the Shah to the English the latter were in duty bound to stand by them. The Persian appeal had a warm advocate in Edward Monnox, the chief English factor in Persia, who had come down to the coast on his recall by the Company, and who had brought with him a strong impression of the supreme importance of making a bold bid for the reversion of the position which Portugal had so long maintained in the Shah's dominions.

Neither Blyth nor Weddell was eager to take upon himself the burden of the great responsibility of joining the Persians against the Portuguese. It was one thing to resist an unprovoked attack and quite another thing to enter a conflict in which the Company had no direct interest and that as an ally of an Asiatic power. And quite apart from considerations of moral expediency there was the danger to be faced of taking the offensive against the well-equipped vessels of Ruy Freire's fleet. A reverse would be disastrous to the Company's position in the Gulf, and it would seriously imperil the whole fortunes of the English in the East. Probably, if left to themselves, the two commanders would have found some excuse for non-compliance, but Monnox was at their elbow in their councils, and his zeal for a Persian understanding eventually carried the day.

An agreement of a far-reaching kind was, as the upshot of the negotiations, arranged between the English and the Persian commander. Amongst the conditions were: (1) that the spoils should be equally divided; (2) that the yield of the customs at Ormuz, when taken, should be shared in future as between the two nations, the English being for ever customs free; (3) that Christians captured should be at the disposal of the English; and (4) that the Persian commander should pay half the cost of the detention of the ships.

As the first diplomatic instrument concluded with Persia this agreement has special interest. It shows that British rights in the Persian Gulf are no modern bogey reared to warn off inconvenient rivals, as has sometimes been represented abroad, but have an ancestry going back three hundred years to an episode in which Englishmen rendered definite and valuable services to the reigning Shah.

Some days after the seal had been put to the document embodying the foregoing terms, the English vessels appeared off Ormuz and found the Portuguese fleet, consisting of five galleons, two small ships and a number of frigates, riding at anchor under the guns of the castle. The Portuguese were in too strong a position to be attacked with any hope of success, and they showed no disposition to come out into open water, where the conditions would be more equalized. The English commanders, therefore, decided to devote their attention to the adjoining island of Kishm, where the Portuguese had built a fort, and were conducting a not unsuccessful fight against a large body of Persian troops which had been sent against them. Blyth and Weddell were the more disposed to make this transfer of the scene of their operations as they learned that the garri-

son at Kishm was under the direct command of Ruy Freire.

The appearance of the English fleet off Kishm had an immediate effect. Before a shot had been fired, Ruy Freire sought an accommodation. Monnox, who was sent ashore to arrange matters, found the Portuguese commander willing to surrender if he could obtain an assurance of the safety of the lives of the Persians who had assisted him. Ruy Freire, on being told that the English could not interfere with this matter, gallantly replied that rather than hand his allies over to the tender mercies of the Persians he would die with them. Nor could he be moved from this determination by a promise subsequently obtained from the Persian General that their lives should be spared.

On the failure of the negotiations, the English ships commenced a bombardment of the fort, but the range proved too great to make their fire effective. To remove the drawback five guns were landed and mounted as close to the walls of the fort as practicable. They were in charge of William Baffin, famous in the annals of Arctic exploration for his bold enterprises in the then little-known region of the Frozen North. The fire was maintained from these pieces with such excellent results that a breach was soon made in the defences. Unhappily, Baffin, who had exposed himself a good deal in his anxiety to achieve successful results, attracted the attention of some Portuguese sharpshooter. As he was in the act of aiming one of the guns, he was shot in the stomach and died almost immediately. His is another example of the life of a navigator of distinction sacrificed on the altar of patriotism in the East in those early days when the history of English influence in Asia was in the making.

Ruy Freire speedily recognized that his position had

been made untenable by the land battery which the unfortunate Baffin had so skilfully directed. Tendering his submission, this time unconditionally, he was escorted with his brother officers to one of the English ships, much to the disappointment of the Persians, who had hoped that they might have secured possession of the person of the eminent captive and so have been able to grace their triumph in a manner which would have appealed to the native imagination.

As soon as the joint occupation of Kishm had been arranged, the English fleet sailed across to Gombroon to prepare for the larger task of attacking Ormuz. There was a splendid audacity about the contemplated operation which would have appealed to a Nelson or a Howe. The city was defended by a strong fort occupying a position at the end of a narrow spit of land, the approach to which was completely covered by the Portuguese guns. Apart from the land defences there had to be reckoned with the Portuguese fleet, which was in every way superior to the English force. The Persian alliance, no doubt, was a counterbalancing advantage, but the experience of Shah Abbas's troops gained at Kishm had not been of a character to justify undue reliance on their prowess. Moreover, the conditions were such that the principal fighting would necessarily have to be done on the seafront of the city.

The English commanders appear to have been from the first fully confident of their ability to carry the attack to a successful issue, for they deliberately weakened their force by despatching one of their ships, the *Lion*, to Surat with Ruy Freire and his fellow-captives. They doubtless reckoned on the moral effect of their victory at Kishm and on the confusion which would necessarily be caused by the

enforced withdrawal of the Portuguese commander and several of his principal officers. Possibly they had definite information as to the inability of the defenders to make anything like a vigorous stand against a combined attack. However they may have been influenced, they formed, as events proved, a very accurate estimate of the situation.

In conjunction with the Persian commander a plan of campaign was drawn up by which the city was to be attacked from the land side by Persian troops, while the English assailed it from the sea. The operations opened on February 10, with the transport to a point on the island of Ormuz in the rear of the city of a large body of Persian troops under the command of Imam Zuli Beg. Almost simultaneously the English ships commenced to bombard the fort and the Portuguese shipping at anchor near it. The attack continued intermittently until the 24th of the month when the *San Pedro*, the largest of the Portuguese galleons, was set on fire, and in a short time destroyed. A Persian attack on the town made a few days previously had been repulsed, and the land operations had somewhat flagged in consequence. But under the stimulus of the episode of the 24th both allies threw themselves with great ardour into the combat. One after another the Portuguese ships were battered to pieces by the English guns and closer and closer the Persians drew their lines.

The position soon became for the Portuguese a desperate one in view of the failure of provisions and the impossibility of receiving any succour from Goa. Fearing an assault on the city which would lead to a general massacre of the inhabitants by the Persians, the Portuguese on April 23 surrendered to the English commanders. To avoid ill consequences the garrison, which numbered, with women and

children, 3,000, were shipped to Muscat and Suhar, with the design that they should be despatched from thence, as opportunity offered, to Goa.

Thus, appropriately on St. George's Day, this famous stronghold of the Portuguese fell into English hands. In its later years, Ormuz had been under a shadow, in common with the other Eastern possessions of Portugal, but it still had upon it the marks of the greatness which it had borne when it was one of the principal *entrepôts* of Eastern trade in the Middle Ages. Travellers who visited it at the time make mention of its splendid churches and mosques, its bustling streets, and its noble houses, furnished with all the luxurious accessories of the refined Western civilization of the age. Viewed from the sea it presented an appearance of magnificence uncommon in an Oriental port at that period. All this has since vanished like "the baseless fabric of this vision." To-day if you go to Ormuz you will find in the place of the spreading city, with its 40,000 population, a miserable settlement of 500 nomads, encamped on a sterile, rocky expanse which was once the famous seat of Portuguese power. A portion of the fort and a lighthouse, of extraordinarily solid construction, are the sole mementoes of the century-long Lusitanian occupation.

The capture of Ormuz was something more than an incident in a protracted struggle for trade supremacy. It constitutes one of the signposts in the history of British influence in the East. The blow inflicted was a fatal one as far as Portuguese ascendancy in Persia was concerned, and it exercised an enormous effect in hastening the downfall of the Portuguese power in the East as a whole. On our side, as will be demonstrated, it led directly to the planting of our flag on an unassailable basis in India. Further, it

created for us that direct interest in the Persian Gulf which some Continental diplomats at this very time are compelled to take into serious account in prosecution of their plans of commercial and political development in the East. All credit, therefore, to the gallant Blyth and his excellent colleague Weddell, who in the true spirit of patriotic enterprise went into this difficult venture on their own initiative, and who, by their energy and skill, carried it to a successful conclusion at a loss of no more than twenty English lives.

CHAPTER XVII

The English secure a Permanent Foothold in India

Joint English and Dutch attack on Bombay—A Dutch iconoclast—Effect of the cruelties of the Inquisition at Goa on the English and the Dutch—English attack on the Portuguese at Surat—Sir William Courten's association—Acquisition by the English of territory on the Coromandel coast—Foundation of Fort St. George (Madras)—Occupation of Bombay proposed to the East India Company—Importance of the position—Bombay forms part of the dower of Charles II's Queen, Catherine of Braganza—Sir George Oxenden's mission to Western India—Royal expedition for the occupation of Bombay—Portuguese Viceroy declines to surrender the island—English troops landed at Angediva, near Goa—Bombay handed over and occupied by the English—Dutch and French opposition—The island ceded by Charles II to the East India Company—Oxenden defends the Surat factory against an attack by Sivaji—Death of Oxenden—Gerald Aungier's successful administration of Bombay—Present grandeur of the city

NOT the least singular feature of the great struggle for predominancy in the East which marked the first half of the seventeenth century, was the relations maintained between the three chief protagonists. While, as we have seen, there was a bitter enmity, verging on open warfare, between the English and the Dutch in the Eastern Archipelago, the forces of the two nations were united in opposition to the Portuguese. The alliance grew out of the Treaty of Defence, which provided that each party

should maintain a fleet for joint operations in furtherance of the interests of the two companies. In its earliest stage, the combination was directed against the Portuguese and Spanish settlements in the Far East, but later the venue of the struggle was changed to the Indian Ocean, where successive attempts were made by the Dutch, at first with English assistance, and later unaided, to strike a blow at the heart of the Portuguese Indian Empire.

No two powers could have been more unhappily mated than were the English and the Dutch at this juncture. Incompatibility of temper was visible from the very outset of their association, and with the progress of time the tragic events which occurred at Amboina and elsewhere served to widen the inevitable divisions. In both the English and the Dutch records there is vivacious evidence of the burning animosities which were engendered on these voyages between the commanders of the two fleets. Charges of cowardice were bandied about; reams of paper were covered with polemics over tactics and sea manners, and the atmosphere was thick with protests and counter protests, written in the strain of hot indignation which was appropriate to so profound a quarrel. "All in all," wrote the Dutch Governor-General Carpentier, in summing up a series of these controversies, "a disagreeable wife is bestowed on us, and we do not know how it is possible to keep you out of disputes and quarrels, if we at least shall properly maintain your rights." This observation not inaccurately reflects the position at the period. It was a *mariage de convenance*, and like most such unions it lacked the spirit of harmony absolutely indispensable to success.

Still, stern necessity kept these strange bed-fellows together for a time. The Portuguese power, though sorely

crippled, was yet capable of inflicting nasty wounds. From Goa might sally forth galleons which would take at a serious disadvantage ships of either English or Dutch origin sailing up or down the coast. A defensive arrangement by which the vessels of the two nations would render mutual assistance was, therefore, most useful to both; and it became more serviceable in the period following the capture of Ormuz, when the Portuguese, rendered desperate by the losses they had sustained, sought to retrieve their laurels under the direction of Ruy Freire, who had managed to escape from English custody at Surat, and had made his way to Goa within a short period after the return of the triumphant English fleet from the Persian Gulf.

Towards the close of 1626, stirred to vigorous action by the reprisals of the Portuguese upon English and Dutch shipping, a combined fleet, consisting of six English and eight Dutch ships, sailed out of Swally roads to deal, if possible, a crushing blow at the enemy. The immediate objective of the squadron was Bombay, where it was known that the principal Portuguese fleet had for some time been anchored. At this period where is now a proud city—" the gate of India "—was merely a squalid Portuguese settlement, with a population of 10,000, mostly poor Mohammedans and low-caste Indians, who obtained a precarious living by fishing and rice cultivation. The close proximity of the place to Goa probably accounts for the comparative insignificance of the Portuguese town. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that with their keen instinct for a good strategic position on a sea-board the Portuguese should have allowed the superb harbour of Bombay to drop into a quite inferior place in their chain of settlements in the East.

In the English mind before this period there had dawned

a glimmering perception of the value of this splendid site. Prior to the visit of the fleet, to which we are about to refer, the Directors, writing out from home, had urged upon their representatives at Surat the advisability of establishing a fortified settlement on the island of Bombay or some other suitable spot in its vicinity. Mr. William Foster, in his introduction to one of the volumes of his transcripts of the Indian Records, suggests that the Court were prompted to make this proposal by Jeronimo de Pavia, a converted Portuguese Jesuit, who was taken to England in one of the Company's ships in 1625. Whether this was the case or not, the suggestion came to nothing, for the excellent reason that the Surat factors had no means at their disposal to carry out such a bold policy as was implied in the virtual conquest of a Portuguese possession within easy striking distance of Goa. In the communication in which the proposition was shown to be impracticable the Company's representatives mentioned that they had proposed to the Dutch a joint scheme of fortified posts but had received an unsympathetic reply. As far as the special object of the Company's attentions was concerned, the Surat functionaries agreed that the position was a desirable one. "Bombay," they wrote, "is noe ill ayre, but a pleasant, fruitful soyle and excellent harbour."

When about the middle of October, 1626, the combined fleet sailed into Bombay harbour, they found that the Portuguese Admiral, Botelho, had escaped them. He had probably heard of the approach of the formidable force of the enemy and had taken shelter under the guns of the Goa fortifications where the English and Dutch could not safely assail him. In their exasperation at being robbed of their anticipated prey, the two commanders decided to lay waste

the settlement. It proved a poor sort of satisfaction, for the Portuguese had removed their more valuable possessions and stores, and a quantity of inferior rice was about all that was secured in the way of loot.

If the Portuguese historian, Faria y Sousa, is to be trusted, the Dutch performed their part of the work of destruction with a special display of religious fanaticism. According to this writer a Dutch captain, entering the Church of Our Lady of Hope, hewed in pieces a crucifix which he found there. The story goes that Botelho, when he heard of the outrage, secured a fragment of the mutilated emblem and swore upon it that he would continue the war until the insult to the Faith was avenged. The Portuguese admiral was true to his vow. He died some time afterwards in a fight with a Dutch ship, the commander of which, who is believed to have been the brutal iconoclast of Bombay, was slain.

Incidents of this character were common in the long-sustained fight between the Dutch and the Portuguese. They grew out of the cruelties practised in the name of religion by the Inquisition at Goa upon the unfortunate Dutch and English captives who fell into the hands of the Goa government. Amongst the Dutch records is preserved a veritable human document in the shape of a diary of a Dutchman, one John van der Berg, who was imprisoned at Goa for four years, ending with April, 1624, two years before the occurrence related in the Bombay church. Van der Berg tells of his confinement for long months in heavy fetters, weighing 58½ lb., in a dark dungeon "called by many people, Encenceye, or also Inferno." Here he underwent horrible tortures. One day his condition became so insupportable that he begged the jailor to put him to death.

"Ah!" replied the ruffian, "you would like to die a nobleman's death, you dog!" Food was now withheld, and Van der Berg had to live on the fish-bones and other garbage which he found on the floor of his cell. He ultimately managed to escape from his life in death. Apart from the record of the writer's own sufferings, Van der Berg's diary throws a lurid light on the relations of the Portuguese and the Dutch. Here is one striking passage: "I will write you what an Englishman told me on oath, that they cut the nose and ears of some Dutchmen and then drowned them: yea, some of them were flayed before they were drowned and died as martyrs through the Inquisition." It is in these and similar chronicles of horror of the period that we may look for the explanation of the ruthlessness with which the Dutch carried on the war against Portugal.

English and Dutch co-operation, on an extensive scale at all events, ended with the expedition of 1626. After this each fought the Portuguese in its own way. The Dutch sent an annual fleet to blockade Goa; the English offered a sturdy resistance at Surat. In the latter case, the operations were facilitated by the grant of a *firman* by the Emperor, authorizing the English to wage war on the Portuguese in Mogul territory if necessary. Acting on this permit, a body of men from the English ships was landed on the shore near Swally and made a successful attack on a Portuguese force encountered in the vicinity. As the first fight in which an organized body of Englishmen was concerned in India, this skirmish, amid the sandhills of the Guzerat coast, has an historic significance. In its immediate influence on the relations of the two races, it was also not devoid of importance, for the contest

tended to carry to the mind of the Portuguese the conviction that the English had better be left alone.

On their part, the English continued to keep their eyes open to the possibility of being able to do something at Bombay. In the early part of 1628 we find Captain John Hall writing from "aboard the *Mary* at Swally" to his employers in England to say that he had sounded "the Bay of Bumbaye." "In my opinion," he wrote, "it is a wonderful fit place for our shipping to harbour in, and may be made so strong that all the Portugals in India (we) being once situated (there) are not able to do us wrong." An opinion so decided must have carried weight with the Court of Directors who at the time were groping their way to a new policy in which fortified posts would take the place of the old unprotected factories. But the times for the Company were decidedly out of joint. Dutch rivalry in India had taken the aggravated form of the sale of goods at rates below cost price. The Company was in too strong a position to be driven out by these tactics, but for the time being its finances were reduced to a very low ebb. To make matters worse, a formidable new English competitor appeared on the scene in an association of traders headed by Sir Wm. Courten, who in flagrant contempt of the East India Company's monopoly, had been granted a right to send ships to India for commercial purposes. One of Courten's ships, which visited India in 1639, distinguished itself by a series of acts of piracy in the Indian Ocean with the consequence that the Mogul became greatly incensed against the English and threatened reprisals on the Company.

Under the accumulating weight of its misfortunes, the Company in 1640 seriously contemplated the abandonment

of its factory at Surat and the establishment in its place of a post at Rajapur on the Konkan coast to the South. Nothing came of the idea, and two years later affairs took such a prosperous turn that the factory regained all its old prestige. Meanwhile, the Company on the Coromandel coast had effected at last that permanent acquisition of territory without which all the clearest minds in the Company recognized no lasting progress could be made. In 1639, Francis Day, the chief factor at Armagon, one of the Company's establishments in Southern India, obtained from the last representative of the old Vizayanagar dynasty, whose territory it was, a grant of a site on the East Coast. Upon this ground was subsequently built Fort St. George, the citadel around which ultimately grew the great city of Madras. It was the first land held in full sovereignty by the English East of Suez, the germ from which the mighty British dominion in the East finally developed.

The acquisition of the Coromandel coast territory was a step which events were not slow to justify. For the first time, the Company's officers were able to maintain an attitude of independence in their dealings with the native authorities with whom they came in contact in prosecuting their trade. What had been accomplished in the East again suggested the desirability of securing a permanent foothold on the West Coast. Additional experience confirmed the earlier impression that on the whole extent of the Malabar coast there was no more eligible spot than Bombay to locate a factory. In 1652, a strong recommendation was sent home by the Surat council that negotiations should be opened up for the purchase of the island. As peace had been concluded with the Portuguese in 1634 and the relations between the two nations had become more

friendly, it was hoped that the proposal might meet with favourable consideration. But the Company's representatives in India had reckoned without the war which broke out between England and Holland in 1653, and which for a time completely interrupted the Indian trade. When hostilities ceased, the position had so changed that the undertaking of any new responsibilities by the Company was out of the question. The directors had a difficult task to hold their own in the face of a competition which had become the fiercer owing to the action of Cromwell in freeing the Indian trade. Events, however, were shaping for a realization of the far-seeing aims of the Surat factors.

While English and Portuguese had agreed after a fashion to sink their differences, the old feud between the Dutch and the Portuguese existed in undiminished force. An armistice for ten years had been concluded between the two nations in 1641, but it was never very carefully observed and as soon as the period for which the arrangement was made terminated, the fight was renewed on the part of the Dutch with increased determination. In 1656 a strong Dutch force after a protracted siege captured Colombo, which, next to Goa, was the most important place which the Portuguese then occupied in the East. Two years later the conquest of the entire Portuguese territory on the island of Ceylon was made effective by a successful assault upon Jaffnapatam. These successes paved the way for the further triumph of Dutch arms in Southern India where in due course the important towns of Cochin and Cannanore, the last named of which had been in Portuguese hands for 170 years, were transferred to the sovereignity of the conquering Hollanders.

An immense effect was produced in Portugal by these

misfortunes. At the end of 1658, before the full tale of disaster was accomplished, the Portuguese Viceroy at Goa sent home a despairing letter, in which he predicted that the whole of the country's possessions in the East would be lost if aid was not sent. The Queen of Portugal, writing in reply to this or some similar missive, buoyed up the depressed official with the prospect of marriages between the daughter of Cromwell and her son, Don Alfonso, on the one hand, and the Princess Infanta and the King of France on the other. It was suggested that out of these unions might develop an alliance which would free Portugal from the clutches of her remorseless enemy. As we know, these marriages, if they were ever seriously considered, came to naught; but it is equally a familiar piece of history that the design which was unfolded in the communication to the Viceroy at Goa of seeking a potential alliance through a dynastic union was carried out three years later when Charles II took as his wife the Infanta of Portugal. In this marriage we have another of the stepping-stones of British Indian history, for part of the dower of the bride was the Island of Bombay.

Few men at the careless period of the Restoration either knew or cared what a tremendous advantage had been conferred by this marriage arrangement. It was not an age of extensive geographical knowledge, and outside a very select circle the name of Bombay was probably quite unknown. The East India Company, however, were quick to understand the importance to their interests of the acquisition. With business-like acumen they prepared for the new era which they saw was opening up by sending to India as their special representative one of the most capable men they could find in Sir George Oxenden, a member

of an old Kentish family, who in his youth had seen some service in India. Oxenden after receiving from the King the honour of knighthood at Whitehall proceeded to India in March, 1662, charged with the principal direction of the Company's affairs in the East.

It was well that at this juncture the chief control of affairs in India was in capable hands. A position of extraordinary difficulty had been created which only a man of sound judgment, wide experience, and abounding courage could cope with successfully. Apart from the weakness incidental to a decayed factory and a lowered prestige at Surat, the new President had to meet a formidable hostile combination which had been brought about by the cession of Bombay. The Dutch bitterly opposed the measure on the general principle that England must not be allowed to secure a permanent lodgment in the East. They had as allies the French, who, having entered into the Indian trade, were not disposed to see a rival obtain an important advantage in the principal sphere of operations. The Mogul authorities, too, were none too friendly to an arrangement which promised to enhance the naval power of the English while at the same time it made it possible for them to withdraw from the control of the native government on land.

Here was material enough to make the transfer of Bombay a source of great anxiety without any complication associated with the change. But it was speedily made apparent that the island was not to be given over with the readiness which the English had ventured to anticipate on the strength of the specific grant which had been made under the Royal marriage settlement. When James Ley, the Earl of Marlborough, who was entrusted with the King's Commission to take over the assigned territory, pre-

sented himself at Goa about the middle of 1662, he found the Portuguese Viceroy altogether disinclined to surrender the island. This functionary at first questioned the validity of the envoy's credentials, and when convincing evidence had been supplied as to their genuineness and sufficiency he raised fresh difficulties. Nor was he to be moved by any arguments that could be adduced to sanction the fulfilment of the treaty.

The position for the English was most embarrassing. The Royal expedition which had gone out was an imposing one, consisting of five ships and a considerable military force, the latter under the command of Sir Abraham Shipman. To keep these vessels in Indian waters while the difficulty was referred to Europe was out of the question; on the other hand, to send home the force intended for the occupation would have the most serious effect on the situation at Surat in that it would appear in the guise of a confession of failure. After due deliberation, the decision was come to to land the military on Angediva, an island not far from Goa, and to send the ships home with the Earl of Marlborough, who would be able personally to report the facts to the Government. This course was pursued, with the result that imperative orders were sent out from Europe to the obstinate Viceroy at Goa to hand over Bombay. It was, however, not until the middle of 1664 that the English in India were able to take advantage of the new situation. In the meantime, disease had played havoc with the force at Angediva. Sir Abraham Shipman and every one of his officers had died, and failing a suitable military successor the command had devolved upon Shipman's secretary, Humphrey Cooke. Cooke, however, seems to have been a man of resource. He had no sooner been put

in possession of the island than he set about fortifying the position as best he could to ward off any attack by a raiding force. That there was urgent necessity for defensive measures was made clear by every boat that came into port. The Dutch, flushed with their successes against the Portuguese, were throughout the Indian Ocean carrying things with a strong hand, and they made a special boast that when the opportunity offered they would wipe out the newly-formed English settlement.

The blow, though anticipated with apprehensive feelings by Oxenden and his fellows at Surat, never fell. It is not easy to understand why the Hollanders held their hand. They had both in 1665 and 1666 powerful fleets at Surat and could have made short work of the small garrison of about one hundred men which Cooke had under his charge if they had gone seriously into the business. The advantages to them of the possession of Bombay at the time would have been enormous. The occupation of the place would have ensured the downfall of Goa and have completed a chain of stations which would have stretched from the northern confines of the Indian Ocean to the Far East. It would also probably have turned the scale so markedly in favour of Dutch supremacy that the English could never have secured a substantial foothold in India. But Providence ordained matters otherwise, and so this little handful of men, lodged in the ruins of the old Portuguese town at Bombay, became a nucleus around which gathered in due course a flourishing settlement, the progenitor of mighty interests on the adjacent continent of India.

Charles II, who had never been greatly interested in the Eastern portion of the dower of his unhappy bride, in March,

1667, handed over Bombay to the East India Company as the surest means of ridding himself of a troublesome and somewhat expensive appanage. On September 21, in the same year the formal transfer took place with some little ceremony, one of the features of the programme being the exchange of the soldiers from the King's to the Company's service.

Oxenden's skilful hand is to be discovered in all the devious negotiations which led up to this consummation of the long cherished hope of founding a settlement on the Western Coast of India. At Surat in the years which succeeded his arrival he had completely restored the tarnished English prestige by a bold and judicious policy. Fortune put in his way a happy opportunity of bringing the English once more into favour at the Mogul Court. In 1663 Sivaji, the renowned Mahratta leader, who was soon to create a power which was to shake the Mogul Empire to its foundations, conceived the idea of raiding the port of Surat whose wealth offered a tempting bait to his adventurous mind. With four thousand of his famous light horsemen he descended like a flood on the Western India port. The governor promptly shut himself up in his castle and the inhabitants fled in terror to the wilds. Only a little handful of Englishmen under Oxenden and a few Dutchmen remained to stem the devastating torrent. So bold a front was presented by these sturdy defenders that Sivaji's men not only spared the foreign factories, but left intact a greater part of the town—for them an extraordinary act of restraint. Aurungzebe, who at this time was on the Imperial throne, regarded the action of the Englishmen with such satisfaction that he granted the East India Company new privileges, and issued an edict exempting all

English goods from customs dues for the period of a twelve-month.

It was Oxdenen's lot, like that of many of his country-men who went to India at this time, to leave his bones in the country. He died on July 14, 1669, at Surat, too early to see the full fruits of his labours, but yet at a sufficiently advanced period to be able to appreciate the momentous character of the change which was coming over the Company's operations. He sleeps with his well-beloved brother Christopher, who was an official of the Company and died at Surat in 1659, in the graveyard at Surat. Over the remains of the two is a magnificent monument, part of which was provided by George Oxenden on the death of his brother and part by the Company, in gratitude for the latter's services. On the older part of the tomb is the following epitaph penned by George Oxenden, which may surely be ranked amongst the most felicitous of such tributes to the dead:—

> "Here is laid Christopher Oxenden, in his life a pattern of fair dealing, in his death a proof of the frailty of life.
> He comes and he is gone. Here he ended his ventures and his life.
> Days only, not years, could he enter in his accounts; for of a sudden death called him to a reckoning.
> Do you ask, my masters, what is your loss and what your gain?
> You have lost a servant, we a companion, by his life; but against this he can write 'Death to me is gain.'"

Bombay in its earliest years was happy in the possession of a governor who carried forward the public-spirited traditions of Oxenden and laid broad and deep the foundations of the city. Gerald Aungier, by name, he was a serious-minded and practical patriot who brought to his charge those sound personal qualities which never fail to secure the confidence and even regard of Oriental people amongst

whom they are practised. When he went to Bombay he found there a population of a few thousands and an insignificant revenue, derived largely from taxes upon rice-land and upon palm trees, from which the native drink known as toddy was distilled. He then vowed "by God's help" to make the place a more worthy centre of English influence, and he was as good as his word. Before his term of service closed in 1677, the population had grown to 50,000, an important revenue had been created, the defences had been strengthened, and the beginnings had been made of a judicial system.

Not the least of Aungier's achievements was that he attracted by his measures a class of settlers of the very best type. The Banians, who are the salt of the Hindu trading community in Western India, were numerously represented, and there was a considerable number of Armenians, also excellent traders, and a distinctly law-abiding class. But the most interesting element in the immigration was the Parsee. Of all the varied races which go to make up the Indian community there is none which possesses in a higher degree the genius for commerce than this body of followers of Zoroaster.

Driven out of Persia by persecution in the sixth century, the Parsees landed on the coast of Western India near Surat, and were granted an asylum by the native authorities. There they lived in comparative peace and contentment for centuries, but they did not greatly prosper owing doubtless to the racial restrictions which prevented them from taking part in the larger life of India. The period of their real prosperity dates from their settlement in Bombay. Entering into the life of the town without the religious and caste prejudices which hampered the Hindus,

and to a less extent the Mahommedans, they quickly made themselves a force in the community. That position has been consolidated and extended, until to-day they are the backbone of Bombay's commercial and professional life, and a factor in the larger field of Indian political and economic development.

As an idle speculation we may wonder what the excellent Gerald Aungier would think if he were permitted to revisit the earth and see what kind of city has developed out of the modest town of 50,000 inhabitants of which he was so justly proud. Nowhere in the East, perhaps, are the marks of British genius more vividly impressed than upon that wonderful port at which the stranger from the West usually gets his first glimpse of India.

> Thy towers, Bombay, gleam bright they say
> Across the dark blue sea,

sang the saintly Heber in anticipation of a meeting with his wife in the city. But even in his time Bombay, though a picturesque spot, was a sleepy and insignificant place, vastly different to the city of to-day. A population of over a million drawn from the four quarters of Asia and from most of the countries of Europe is now crowded upon the island. Its streets palpitate with a life more picturesque and varied than that of any populous centre under the sun. In and out of its docks passes annually a volume of shipping which places Bombay amongst the largest ports of the world. Public buildings, vast in size and of imposing architectural features, crowd the European quarter, and from its central railway station—the most magnificent structure of its kind in the East—are daily dispatched trains which cover the journey across the continent in fewer days than it took Heber months to traverse the distance.

Ornate mosques and temples minister to the religious needs of the polyglot native population, and in the outskirts of the city, on the breezy altitudes of Malabar Hill, and the wave-washed strand of Cumballa, are noble mansions in which amid all the refinements and luxuries of the West the merchant princes of Bombay, European and native, secure a well-earned relaxation from the strain and stress of the mart and the counting house in the hot and dusty confines of the far-away fort where Gerald Aungier mused on the possibilities of greatness that were inherent in this matchless situation. And over these manifestations of man's activity is the glamour of a tropical environment of surpassing charm. All around are the sparkling waters of the Indian Ocean dotted on the harbour side with craft of every imaginable description and of every size from the leviathan liner, or stately cruiser, to the tiny canoe which a bronzed little native boy is navigating with his hands as paddles. Across the broad expanse of the harbour rise from the water the low-lying Butcher's Island and beyond the loftier outlines of classic Elephanta, while away in the distance on the landward side, seen through a shimmering violet haze, are the irregular peaks of the Western Ghauts, a glorious background to a superb picture. Truly it is a city "full of goodly prospect," whether it is viewed from the standpoint of material development or of natural beauty.

CHAPTER XVIII

The English on the East Coast of India

The first expedition to Bengal—Gabriel Boughton, a friend at Court, obtains trading facilities for the Company—Factories established at Balasor, Cassimbazar and Patna in subordination to Hooghly—Sir Edward Winter's *coup d'état* at Madras—George Foxcroft the President imprisoned—Expedition to restore the *status quo*—Winter surrenders—Sir William Langhorne's mission

IN previous chapters we have seen how the English adventurers after toil and stress, many wanderings and the expenditure of much blood and treasure, found a foothold for their weary feet in India—on the Coromandel Coast at Fort St. George, and on the Western Coast at Bombay. But there remained another fateful step to be taken before the shadowy outline was traced of the vast edifice of British dominion in India which is in existence to-day in full splendour. Then as now the commerce of India flowed in the fullest force along the course of the sacred Ganges and its tributaries. Over its classic surface passed, as they had done from the remotest ages, the productions of half a continent. From the great centres of population of Upper India went to and from the coast an unceasing stream of traffic, creating at a hundred points along the river's course important marts to which merchants from near and far resorted. In Bengal itself was the seat of many industries and the home of a numerous population

whose exploitation offered openings of a promising kind to a great commercial organization of the character of the East India Company. To such a quarter it was inevitable that the English should sooner or later turn their serious attention.

Even before the title deeds of Fort St. George were secured, an English expedition intent on finding new openings for trade had penetrated to Bengal. It was an unassuming little venture, in which only eight Englishmen took part, but it has its place in history as the first intrusion of an organized body of representatives of the now ruling race into the most important of the Indian provinces.

The story of the journey is set forth for the benefit of posterity by a certain William Benton "of the parish of St. Saviour's, Southwark," quartermaster of the Company's ship *Hopewell*, who accompanied the party as navigating adviser. Starting in the early part of 1633 the expedition penetrated as far as Fort Barabati, the seat of the Court of Malcandy, or Mukund Deo, the last of the indigenous Kings of Orissa. The ruling Mogul, Viceroy Agha Mahommed Zaman, a Persian, received the visitors graciously, but he was not disposed to forego the customary court etiquette which consisted of a kissing of the viceroyal toe as a preliminary to conversation. Cartwright, the leader of the party, when the toe was insinuatingly uncovered, twice declined the suggestion that he should salute it, but eventually, with a wry face, "he was fain to do it." Agha Mahommed, however, was not at all a bad specimen of the Mogul dignitary. He treated the Englishmen most kindly and gave them permission to trade. Acting under his grant Cartwright started factories at Hariharapur and Balasor, and for some years these were centres of the Com-

pany's trade. But the operations were seriously hampered by Portuguese and Dutch hostility, and in a few years the Hariharapur factory was closed and the Balasor establishment was reduced to the smallest proportions.

Then came a new stage in the history of the Company's relations with Bengal. They had an important friend at the Mogul Court in the person of Gabriel Boughton, who was at one time surgeon of the Company's ship *Hopewell.* A romantic story was long current as to the circumstances which brought Boughton into relationship with the Imperial house. It was stated that he was sent for in consequence of an accident to a Royal princess, the favourite daughter of Shah Jehan, who returning one night from visiting her father to her own apartments in the harem set fire to her clothing by brushing unwittingly against a lamp. As she was in close proximity to men her modesty forbade her to call out and by the time she reached the women's quarters she was dreadfully burned. In despair of her life, Shah Jehan dispatched a messenger post haste to Surat for an English doctor, and Boughton was sent in response. He rendered such good service that he was permanently retained by the emperor.

It is unfortunate that in the interests of truth this pretty romance must be set aside. Boughton, it is known, did not reach Agra until 1645, a year after the accident, and there is evidence, moreover, that the princess was attended by a famous physician who was brought express from Lahore to treat the case. Boughton, however, for some cause undoubtedly occupied a position of great favour at the Mogul Court, and in such circumstances had the means materially to assist his old masters. His aid appears to have been invoked not in vain in reference to the Bengal affairs

of the Company. Largely as a result it would seem of concessions which he obtained the Company in 1650 set on foot measures for the opening of a new factory further inland than Balasor, at Hooghly. In the following year it was actually established and thenceforward it became a centre of the Company's Bengal trade. But at the outset the natural difficulties of communication with this place, a hundred miles up one of the most dangerous rivers in the world, prevented a full development of its capabilities. There was even some talk of abandoning it in favour of a more accessible spot and one in which the Company's representatives would not be so exposed to the exactions and obstructions of the Mogul officialdom.

Matters were in this state when the conclusion of the war with the Dutch in 1657, followed by the grant of favours to the Company by Cromwell, brought with it for India the inspiration of a new hope. The Bengal establishment was greatly strengthened and additional factories were created at Balasor, Cassimbazar and Patna in subordination to Hooghly. The death of Shah Jehan in September, 1657, with the fratricidal war which followed leading up eventually to Aurungzebe's accession on July 22, 1658, had a very injurious effect on the Company's interests in India, and markedly in Bengal where the administrative confusion of the Interregnum was taken advantage of by native officials to prefer extortionate demands upon the factors.

A crisis was reached at Hooghly in 1661 when the Company's agent in an ill-advised moment seized a native vessel as security for the payment of some debts. Mir Jumlah, the Viceroy, in his anger at the action taken, threatened to sweep the English from Bengal, and he would probably have been as good as his word if he had not had more im-

portant matters to engage his attention at the time in the shape of rebellions in Cooch Behar and Assam, which necessitated his leading an expedition to those regions. As things turned out the difficulty was settled by the release of the ship and the tendering of a humble apology.

The Restoration, which had given the English Bombay and had brought in its train for the Company a new charter of a far-reaching kind, empowering the Company to build fortifications, raise troops and make war on non-Christian powers, strengthened materially the influences which were at work for the opening up of the Bengal trade. Sir Edward Winter. who had been sent out as President of Fort St. George to reorganize the factories in Madras and Bengal, early came to the conclusion that a bold and even aggressive policy must be adopted both on the Coromandel Coast and in Bengal if the Company was to hold its own. He advocated that the Dutch example should be followed of maintaining a powerful naval force to keep the native authorities in awe and ensure protection for trade. His conclusions were sound as events proved, but the Directors in London took alarm at his ambitious schemes and sent out in 1665 Mr. George Foxcroft to supersede him. It was an arbitrary measure, which led to one of the most extraordinary episodes which are to be found in the chequered history of the English in India.

Foxcroft, with his son Nathaniel, on landing in Madras met with a very cool reception from the local English community who were in entire sympathy with Winter's aims. Defects of temperament on the side of the Foxcrofts added as time went on to their unpopularity. They were Puritans, or had been, and what was worse, they were, to use the cant of the time, Levellers. One day in a discussion over

the dinner table in the factory, Nathaniel Foxcroft gave utterance to the proposition that no king had any right to his throne except that conferred by might and that a private man's interest came before that of the sovereign. Rank treason this seemed to the Royalist factors, whose loyalty had probably taken a deeper shade from the incidents in which most of them had participated before leaving England. Perhaps, too, they felt that if there was to be a struggle it would be as well to have it on this issue which would enlist for them sympathy at home. They were, at all events, prompt to take advantage of the Agent's indiscretion. With Winter as leader they decided upon a course of action which was virtually a *coup d'état.*

The first move in the game was a denunciation of the Foxcrofts as traitors to the two independent members of the Council—Jeremy Samebrooke and William Dawes. These worthies when pressed to accept a formal charge declined to take action on the ground that the Agent could not properly be impugned. Failing a legal means of securing the downfall of intruders the conspirators resorted to open violence. With Chuseman, the Captain of the garrison, on their side, the execution of their plans was easy.

Selecting their time well they delivered their blow on Saturday morning at the hour for prayers. George Foxcroft, hearing that trouble was brewing, drew his rapier and in the company of Samebrooke and Dawes, rushed downstairs to the courtyard, where the soldiers were drawn up fully armed with their pistols ready to fire. He was met with cries of "For the King! For the King! Knock them down! Fire!" He advanced and commenced to expostulate, when Chuseman rushed at him and having fired his pistol without effect closed with the Agent and threw him

to the ground. The soldiers, taking their cue from their leader, discharged their pistols, mortally wounding Dawes. Samebrooke, who had escaped injury by some miracle, ran forward to the help of the Agent and was promptly knocked down and secured by the soldiers. Meanwhile, Nathaniel Foxcroft, having obtained his pistols from his room on the ground floor, appeared on the scene with the object of making a good fight on his own account. In a brief space of time, however, he was also secured.

The revolution was now complete. It only remained for Winter to give effect to it by assuming office. This he did by making a solemn declaration that he had accepted the chief direction of affairs upon the unanimous request of the Company's officials and that he would discharge the duties until it should be ordered otherwise either by the plurality of the Council or by the Court. Almost simultaneously Winter forwarded to the Directors a dispatch seeking to vindicate his action on the ground of the traitorous and seditious conduct of the Foxcrofts. He also wrote to the King, to the Archbishop of Canterbury and to the Royal Commander at Bombay, giving a narrative of the course of events.

When the facts were known in England the Directors sought the intervention of the King to secure the withdrawal of Winter from his usurped position. Armed with a Royal proclamation promising a pardon to Winter and his accomplices if they surrendered peacefully, an Agent named Clavell was sent out to arrange matters. Meanwhile, the Winter faction had been strengthened in their resolve to maintain their position by the support they had received from the Royal Commander in Bombay, who had gone the length of issuing a proclamation denouncing the Foxcrofts

as traitors to the King. In consequence, Clavell's mission was treated with contempt, Winter and his Council even proceeding so far as to declare that his credentials were forgeries.

Clearly nothing but force would break down the obstinate determination of the Winter faction to cling to their usurped powers. Accepting the inevitable, the Company prepared an expedition of sufficient strength to make resistance impossible. Five ships carrying out five companies of soldiers and a Royal Commission with full powers to reduce the rebel Government sailed for India at the end of 1667. A portion of the fleet anchored off Madras on May 21, 1668. Two officials from shore who proceeded on board were promptly made prisoners. Subsequently a demand was made by letter to Winter for the restoration of the fort.

Winter now perceived that the end of his reign had come, and when he had sought and obtained a guarantee for his personal safety and the protection of his property, he handed over the government. Thereafter, George Foxcroft was reinstalled in the Agency with all his old powers pending the decision of the Privy Council to which the whole matter had been referred. The order which ultimately emanated from this high authority was that Nathaniel Foxcroft should be sent home and that George Foxcroft should remain for another year at the head of the Government. Winter, it was further directed, should be permitted to stay on for a short time to arrange his affairs and should in the meantime be treated with respect. Finally, a Commission, with Sir William Langhorne at its head, was appointed to investigate the whole transaction and take evidence on the spot.

Langhorne's commission only led to a further complica-

tion of the already tangled skein of events. After wasting some eighteen months in fruitless inquiries it relegated the whole question home. Not until 1672, when both George Foxcroft and Winter embarked for England may the episode be said to have terminated.

The whole occurrence is so extraordinary as to seem almost to pass belief, but it must be remembered that in days when India was a six month's journey from England, and when the directing hand from home was still for the most part a nerveless display of incompetent authority, there were possibilities for the bold adventurer which cannot be fully realized in the present prosaic age.

CHAPTER XIX

The Arch Interloper—Thomas Pitt

Interlopers in the Bay of Bengal—Thomas Pitt a leading member of the fraternity—Governor Hedge's description of an interloping party ashore—Pitt's trading ventures—He defies the Company—He returns to England and is arrested and fined—Reappears in India—The Company makes terms with him and appoints him President of Fort St. George (Madras)—His administration—The Pitt diamond and its history—Last years in England—Pitt's character

WINTER'S amazing usurpation described in the preceding chapter had its counterpart in the daring achievements of some of the adventurers of this period who went to India as interlopers—that "horrid trade" which to the sleek old gentlemen who directed the affairs of the East India Company seemed to touch the lowest depth of infamy. There were many such in the Bay of Bengal at that juncture. They were men who, enticed to the East by the profitable character of the trade, went out with their own ships in defiance of the charter of the Company which conferred upon it an absolute monopoly of the Indian trade. Bold and dashing adventurers all, they played their part on the great stage of Indian life with an audacity which was proof alike against the shafts of the privileged merchants in London and the impediments placed in their way by native potentates.

Hedges, a servant of the Company, who was sent to Bengal as Agent and Governor, and who has left behind an

entertaining Diary for the benefit of modern readers, gives a vivid picture of one of these interloping parties he met with in the course of one of his journeys. The leader in making a ceremonial visit to the native court went richly habited in a dress of scarlet and lace. "The Englishmen in blew capps and coats edged with red all round with Blunderbusses went before his pallankeen; 80 peons before them, and 4 musicians playing on the Weights with 2 flags before him." "A gawdy shew and great noise add much to a public person's credit in this country," sapiently remarks the diarist by way of commentary.

A conspicuous member of the fraternity was Thomas Pitt, the progenitor of two of the greatest British statesmen, and himself a man who in later life won considerable distinction. Pitt was a born free lance. He had gauged to a nicety the foibles of the Oriental and he played upon them with a master hand during a career of almost unbroken prosperity extending from the year 1674 into the new century. The Directors, when they got to hear of him, as they soon did, sent out orders that he should be seized and imprisoned pending the arrival of a ship in which he could be dispatched to England. But Pitt was not the man to put his neck in a noose. He gave a wide berth to the Company's stations and outside their limits always had at his command a sufficient force for his personal defence. After some years successful trading, mostly with Persia, he seems to have landed at Madras, whether of set design or otherwise is not clear. He was haled before the Council there and is said on the occasion to have promised compliance with the Company's orders. But he was soon at his old work again, building up by successful trade a handsome fortune.

In 1682 he went to England to enjoy a hard-earned holiday. Proceedings were commenced against him in the Courts by the Company, but the circumstance did not deter Pitt from returning to India to recommence his old interloping career. The Court forwarded peremptory instructions that his person should be seized at all costs, " he being a desperate fellow, and one that we fear will not stick at any mischief," observed the instructions.

In his accustomed airy manner, Pitt snapped his fingers at the threats of the Company. Landing at Balasor he gave out that he was the Agent of a newly-formed Company that was to supersede the old organization. In keeping with his assumed character he adopted considerable state. Proceeding up the Hooghly and landing at Chinsurah he obtained from the native Governor privileges of trading, with the right to build a factory for his supposititious Company. Hedges served him with a subpoena out of Chancery, and called upon him to answer it. Pitt blandly told the Agent that he would answer it in England in his good time. At length, as a result of strenuous efforts, Hedges obtained from the Nabob of Dacca an order for the arrest of Pitt and a fellow offender. Nothing followed, however, because the arch interloper took care to keep on good terms with the native authorities by paying readily handsome dues for all goods landed.

When the situation began to get a little too warm to be pleasant, Pitt flitted to England of his own accord. He was arrested on arrival at the suit of the Company and fined £1,000 for interloping, but the Court reduced the penalty subsequently to £400.

Apparently by this time Pitt had tired of his life of Indian adventure. He settled down in Dorset as a landed

gentleman, and entered Parliament as member for New Sarum, or Salisbury. But the call of the East was irresistible, and after playing propriety at Westminster and elsewhere for nearly ten years, he embarked again for India, and in October, 1693, re-appeared at his old haunts at Balasor. The Directors, after a vain attempt to suppress him, came to the sensible conclusion to make terms with him. This they did with the result that after discharging various missions for the Company in Europe he blossomed forth in full glory in 1697 as President of Fort St. George. He made an excellent administrator, displaying those statesmanlike qualities which are to be looked for in the head of so illustrious a line as that of the elder and the younger William Pitt. In 1702, when Daud Khan, the Nabob of the Carnatic, attacked Madras, he defended the station with such courage and resolution and conducted the negotiations with the native assailant with so much perspicuity, that the Nabob eventually retired, agreeing in consideration of a small subsidy to restore all that he had taken from the Company or its servants. Pitt continued in office until 1709 when his Indian career was closed by a difference with his employers which led to his recall. By that time Madras had become an important station with a far-reaching trade and possessing a political influence which radiated to a greater part of Southern India.

Thomas Pitt's life in Madras, as illustrated in his letters, seems to have been one of considerable usefulness and activity. He kept a sharp eye on the general affairs of India and gave shrewd advice which though not always followed was often extremely helpful. From the first he advocated the adoption of a vigorous policy in dealing with the native powers. " Force and a strong fortification were

better than an ambassador," he urged in one of his dispatches. On another occasion he wrote home telling the Court that the Mogul officials would never let the Company's trade run on quietly until they were well beaten. "Besides," he added, "your having suffered your servants to be treated after that most ignominous manner at Surat for many years past has encouraged them to attempt the like in all your settlements, and I hear in Bengal that they *chawbuck* (whip) Englishmen in their public durbars, which formerly they never presumed to do, and the *Junkaneers* all over the country are very insolent: only those within our reach I keep in pretty good order by now and then giving them a pretty good banging." Pitt knew the type of Indian official with whom the Company chiefly had to deal. If his advice had been accepted instead of being ignored the path to ultimate supremacy would have been much smoother for the British.

Though an essentially hard man, Thomas Pitt had his little weaknesses. One of his hobbies was gardening, a pursuit which he seems to have followed with all the ardour of an enthusiast. "I hear," he wrote to a friend at Calcutta in 1702, "that you are the top gardener in Bengall and I am as well as I can imitating of you here . . . and should be extremely obliged to you if you would yearly furnish me with what seeds your parts afford: Beans, Pease, etc.: they must be new and the best way to send 'em is in bottles well stopped, for no manner of seed thrives here if it be the growth of the place, for it dwindles to nothing." To a friend in London a little later he wrote: "My leisure time I generally spend in gardening and planting and making such improvements which I hope will tend to the Company's advantage, and the good of the whole

place, for that in a little time I hope the place will be able to subsist of itself without much dependence upon the country, for that in the late long siege (by Daud Khan) we were not a little pinched for provisions." The spectacle of the arch interloper cultivating his cabbage patch in the vicinity of Fort St. George must have had its diverting side for those who were closely associated with him in his earlier roving career.

Pitt, amongst his less estimable qualities, had a capacity for accumulating wealth which his enemies were not slow to denounce as avarice. His name in this connexion will always be associated with the acquisition of the famous Pitt Diamond which is one of the historic gems of the world. A scandalous story current at the time relative to the circumstances in which the stone came into Pitt's possession suggested the well-known lines of Pope—

> "Asleep and naked as an Indian lay,
> An honest factor stole a gem away;
> He pledged it to the Knight: the Knight had wit,
> So kept the diamond and the rogue was bit."

It was clearly proved, however, that the conditions under which the purchase was made reflected no discredit on Pitt. The stone was discovered at the diamond mines on the Kistna by a slave, who secreted it in a wound in his leg. It was stolen from him by an English captain, who disposed of it to a Madras dealer named Jamchand. Pitt, who was an extensive buyer of precious stones, was offered the diamond by Jamchand in the ordinary course of business. After protracted bargaining the gem changed hands for £20,000. It was then sent home and placed in the hands of skilled diamond cutters, who by their processes reduced the weight from 410 carats to 136¾ carats. From the workshop

emerged a superb gem which was immediately recognized as one of the finest stones in the world. Pitt, with characteristic acumen, set himself to the task of disposing of his precious possession to the fullest advantage. It was not the kind of article to secure a ready market, and many anxious days and restless nights were spent by the owner ere he found for it a purchaser in the person of an Agent of the Regent of France. The price paid was £135,000, and enormous as the amount is, it fell far below the actual value of the stone which in 1791 was calculated at £480,000. The gem, which after the purchase was placed in the Crown of France, is still preserved amongst the few Royal jewels left by the vicissitudes of time in the national treasure-house in Paris.

In his later years Pitt was a prominent figure in Parliament. He died on April 28, 1726, and was buried at Blandford St. Mary's. Of all the earlier adventurers who were conspicuous in the East he was in many respects the most able. There were in him the qualities which are peculiarly valuable in a field such as India where in administration so much depends upon a prompt and yet calm judgment, resourcefulness and a steadiness of purpose in those who are in positions of power. If he had lived a century later he would probably have ranked amongst the great British rulers of India. Even without the opportunities offered to his successors, he left a name which will ever be associated with the firm building up of British power in Southern India and the organization of the earliest of the English settlements.

CHAPTER XX

Job Charnock founds Calcutta

Expedition to Bengal to exact redress for wrongs inflicted upon the English—Job Charnock assigned the post of honour—His career—Charnock sacks Hooghly—Evacuation of Hooghly and temporary occupation of Sutanuti the modern Calcutta—Subsequent removal to Hijili—Attack by Mogul troops—Gallant defence—Dire straits of garrison—Welcome reinforcements—Peace concluded—Return of the English to Sutanuti—Charnock in disgrace—New expedition under Heath—Its failure—English retire to Madras—Are invited back to Bengal—Calcutta founded—Charnock's last days—His character

IN following Thomas Pitt's career we have drifted somewhat from the main channel of the narrative which before he was introduced upon the scene was flowing irregularly through the plains of Bengal. When we return to the course it is to find that little real progress had been made by the Company in the way of the establishment of a permanent settlement in that quarter. For years the vain attempt had been made to conduct trade from factories which were mere glorified warehouses existing by the goodwill of the native authorities. In the absence of any proper status the Englishmen were treated with scant courtesy at almost all times and not infrequently with actual injustice. Protests made against oppressive exactions of local officials were either disregarded altogether or contemptuously dealt with. In fine, the Company were at the mercy of every capricious wind that blew in

India at a time when the conditions of government were continually changing. They had also to suffer from the arrogance of the Dutch who with a superior force at their disposal were able to take up a high line and harass their rivals with impunity.

Gradually but surely the lesson was driven home to the reluctant minds of the Directors that if they were ever to succeed in creating a successful trade in Bengal they must have a fortified base. In 1686 they took exceptional measures to give effect to this policy. In that year they sent out to India a strong expedition which was charged with the duty of exacting satisfaction for wrongs inflicted by the Mogul Government. Failing redress from the Nabob of Dacca the force was to proceed to Chittagong and "seize and take the said town, fort and territory by force of arms." After capture the place was to be made as safe "as the art of invention of man can extend to." It was finally directed that Mr. Job Charnock was to be "Governor of our fort, town and territory of Chythegam."

Job Charnock, who was thus assigned the post of honour in this enterprise, was a man of very remarkable personality who fills a great place in the early history of British India. His parentage is obscure, but it may, perhaps, be surmised from his name that he came of the same Puritan stock which furnished so many of the earlier officials of the Company. He landed in India in either 1655 or 1656 and served his apprenticeship as a Junior Member of the Council of Cassimbazar, a much less important position than the high-sounding title would imply. Early in 1664 Charnock obtained his first important appointment as chief of the factory which the Company had established at

Patna. In this position he remained continuously for sixteen years. He married a native wife and adopted native modes of living. It was even whispered by his enemies that he had become a pervert to Paganism and sacrificed regularly at the Hindu shrines. The allegation was probably false, but unquestionably Charnock had by long residence in isolation at Patna become completely immersed in Indian customs. Such a man was not ill-qualified to conduct negotiations with native powers where an intimate knowledge of the vernacular and of the native habits of thought was all important. There was nothing, however, in his previous history to warrant the supposition that he would make a successful man of action. It might even be imagined that his long life of comparative retirement in India had warped those qualities which are most put to the test in a physical struggle. But Charnock, as the sequel will show, was no decadent Englishman with fibres sapped by an enervating Orientalism. He played his part on the great Indian stage with the best and most energetic of his fellow pioneers.

When the crisis came in 1684 Charnock was at Hooghly, whither he had escaped with difficulty from Patna, out of the clutches of the Nabob who was intent on wringing from him an amount unjustly claimed to be due from the Company. The Agent, on entering into his own, at once set about making his dispositions to meet the coming storm. Before the year had expired three ships had come out, large vessels, one of seventy, another of sixty-five and the other of fifty guns, carrying some six hundred seamen. There was in addition a number of small craft including three frigates each equipped with twelve guns and manned by twenty seamen. With the fleet arrived a

military force of three or four hundred men formed into companies on the model of the King's troops. The strength of the forces at Charnock's disposal was completed by a number of Portuguese and Rajput soldiers, the former of little account as fighters and the latter lacking the necessary discipline to make them really serviceable.

These preparations aroused the native officials to action. Troops were hurried up from all quarters to overawe these audacious Englishmen who had shown a disposition to challenge the mighty Mogul authority. A battery of eleven guns was erected to command the anchorage, and the settlement was placed in a condition of blockade by the issue of an edict prohibiting the sale to its inhabitants of any supplies.

It only needed a little incident to bring about a condition of actual warfare. This was supplied one day towards the end of October when three English soldiers on proceeding to the market were beaten, bound and carried off prisoners. Charnock sent out a company of infantry to avenge the insult and bring back the prisoners. The sally was expected and as soon as the men emerged from the shelter of the settlement they were assailed on all sides by large bodies of horse and foot soldiers. They stood their ground for a time, but eventually had to retreat with a loss of seven of their number killed or wounded.

Encouraged by their success the natives set fire to the hovels surrounding the settlement and commenced a vigorous bombardment of the ships at anchor. Charnock ordered up a body of English troops stationed at Chandernagar to strengthen his force for an emergency which

he perceived would require all his resources to deal with. Unfortunately before these arrived another reverse had been sustained in an attempt to capture the enemy's battery. The reinforcements, however, speedily changed the aspect of affairs. A fresh attack on the battery made by the new arrivals, under the command of Captain Arbuthnot, was completely successful. The enemy's guns were taken and disabled and sweeping onwards the victorious contingent penetrated as far as the house of the Governor who incontinently fled. Subsequently, the town was bombarded by the ships in the river and sacked by landing parties sent ashore for that purpose. Before the hand of the avenger was stayed some sixty of the enemy had been killed, including three men of note and a good part of the town had been laid in ruins.

The punishment inflicted brought the native officials to a reasonable state of mind. Through the Dutch, who had a settlement in the vicinity, the Governor sued for peace. His overtures were promptly accepted by Charnock, who was glad of the opportunity which the armistice offered of carrying out a long-formed intention to withdraw from Hooghly to some convenient and defensible spot. He at once proceeded to carry out his plans for the evacuation, but in the absence of proper transport facilities the operations dragged and it was not until the end of the year that the last consignment was dispatched and the Englishmen were able to congratulate themselves on having effected a peaceable and honourable retreat in circumstances which promised an accommodation of all differences.

Charnock and his associates relied a little too much upon the effect of their masterly turning of the tables upon the

enemy at Hooghly. Though they had put a wholesome fear into the mind of the local Governor their action had had a totally different effect upon Shayista Khan, the Nabob of Dacca, the supreme Mogul authority in these parts. Shayista Khan was greatly incensed, as perhaps was only natural, when he heard of the doings of the insolent foreigners. He collected from all quarters troops with the determination of driving the English out of Bengal. To conceal his plans and gain time he affected to be desirous of concluding a permanent arrangement. He encouraged Charnock to formulate his demands. The Agent utilized the opportunity to elaborate a comprehensive list of claims. He asked for a site for a fort, for permission to establish a mint and to conduct trade free of customs. In addition the native Government was to rebuild at its own cost the Company's factory, restore all the money it had appropriated and assist to recover the Company's debts.

A suspiciously prompt assent was given locally to all these demands. Indeed, it seemed that the only thing wanting to complete the treaty was its formal ratification by the Nabob and the Emperor. But the time at last came for the native authorities to throw off the mask and then Charnock was left in no doubt as to how matters stood. He received back the treaty unsigned with an uncompromising declaration of war, phrased in language of indignation at the effrontery of the English in preferring such demands.

Accepting the challenge Charnock promptly took the initiative in the struggle by burning down the King's salt houses on the banks of the river and attacking and capturing the forts at what is now Garden Reach. After

the evacuation of Hooghly the English headquarters had been temporarily established at Sutanuti, a spot which to-day constitutes the northern quarter of Calcutta. This position was now abandoned for one lower down the river on the island of Hijili which was thought to offer a better prospect of making a successful stand. Here Charnock concentrated his forces, using the fort which he had seized from the Mogul garrison as his new headquarters. When all possible protective measures had been taken there was a good deal of room left for anxiety. The fort was a flimsy structure standing amidst a grove of trees and situated some five hundred yards from the nearest landing-place, the defence of which had to be entrusted to a specially constructed battery. Altogether only 420 soldiers were available for garrison purposes, though the *Beaufort*, one of the largest ships of the fleet, with its frigate were at hand to render valuable aid in preventing communication between the island and the mainland, and two other ships of the fleet were at Balasor with a considerable additional contingent.

It was at the latter place that the first serious move in the new campaign was made. A force of one hundred and seventy men landed from the ships attacked and captured the Mogul fort which commanded the river, and the next day marched to the town of Balasor, which they sacked and fired. The English rounded off their operations by seizing two Mogul ships which, inopportunely for their owners, came into port. The only incident to cloud a brilliant piece of work was the surprise and capture of a boat's crew of seventeen who had incautiously gone too far up the river. Of the entire crew only one escaped. The heads of several of the less fortunate subsequently

adorned poles in Hooghly, immensely to the gratification of the impoverished inhabitants of that ruined town.

At Hijili the English garrison soon began to realize the truth that more soldiers die by disease than by the weapons of war. A low-lying pestilential spot, it was about the worst situation that could have been selected for an encampment of English soldiers, most of whom were fresh from home. Disease quickly appeared in their ranks, and as the hot months came on it worked such frightful havoc that the proportion of sick was never less than a third. Meanwhile, the Mogul forces had been steadily accumulating on the mainland opposite the island. They had erected there a battery which enabled them to dominate the river and even threaten the fort.

Action had to be taken if the island was not to be made altogether untenable. A series of raids were consequently organized with the object of harassing the enemy and giving the men a little wholesome excitement. Though they were uniformly successful the overwhelming numbers of the enemy enabled them to make good all damage that was done. When one battery was destroyed, another and heavier one was established.

In May the arrival of the Nabob's general with twelve thousand fresh troops was the signal for a more vigorous effort to overwhelm the English. New batteries were erected along the river and a constant fire from them was kept up. The range was good, and under the harassing effect of the bombardment, combined with the natural depression engendered by heat and disease, the spirits of the garrison fell to zero.

Becoming more audacious with the absence of any initia-

tive on the side of the besieged the Moguls landed a force of several hundred cavalry and artillery on the island, captured an unfinished battery, killed one of the English officers who was sick and carried off his wife and child into captivity. They would assuredly have captured the fort if the English had not rallied and after a desperate fight driven the assailants off. But though victory was temporarily won, the general situation was blacker than ever. Charnock had buried half his men, and of the other half only one hundred were fit for duty. Of the forty officers who had originally been of the expedition actually only one remained at his post.

Charnock, surveying the situation with the eye of an intelligent though amateur strategist, came to the conclusion that a move must be made to protect the approach to the landing place if absolute disaster was to be avoided. A suitable position existed in a solidly constructed building about halfway to the landing stage which he had used as a battery. This post, together with the one at the landing place, was strengthened by the calling in of the small vessels which had been posted around the island. With the additional men obtained from the shipping Charnock maintained a gallant fight against the Mogul troops which were besieging the fort. He succeeded in keeping the enemy at a respectful distance, but whether unaided he could have maintained the unequal struggle for any lengthened period is doubtful, having regard to the steady depletion of his forces by disease.

Happily for him, happily for the cause of which he was the faithful champion, at the critical moment there appeared on the scene a welcome reinforcement of men in a ship which had arrived from Europe. This detachment

numbered only seventy, but it brought with it all the vigour and dash of the West and a confidence in race which had lost none of its pristine freshness.

The effect produced by the new arrivals on the garrison was marvellous. Their wan faces glowed with a new hope as they dragged their emaciated frames to the outside of the fort to see their comrades from home marching up from the boats in all the panoply of military state. If it had been a division which had arrived instead of a weak company a greater stir could not have been created.

Charnock, witnessing the scene like the rest with a feeling of intense gratification, was seized with a happy thought. Why should this enthusiasm be allowed to evaporate? Why not repeat the landing for the edification of the enemy, as well as for their own satisfaction? The idea was no sooner conceived than acted upon. By his orders the men who had disembarked quietly dropped by twos and threes back to the landing place, and when they had all re-assembled there marched again to the fort with flags flying and drums beating to the cheers of the garrison, which were as lustily raised as on the first occasion. This process again and again repeated kept the place for the greater part of the day in a feverish state of animation.

The trick worked admirably. The Mogul commander, deceived into the belief that the English garrison had been strongly reinforced, a day or two later sent a flag of truce to treat for peace. Charnock was naturally delighted to accept the olive branch, and by June 10, 1687, terms had been arranged which left the English free to march out with all the honours of war.

It had been a wonderful fight. For three months this

handful of Englishmen had kept at bay an army and had done that while they held a position which had many and serious disadvantages. Outwardly little was accomplished as far as the main object of the expedition was concerned, but it does not admit of question that the courageous stand made on this occasion by Charnock infused into the mind of the native authorities a healthy respect for the prowess of the English which ultimately bore rich fruit.

From Hijili the English went to Ulubaria for three months, and at the expiration of that time once more established themselves at Sutanuti; Charnock selected the latter spot with the definite intention of making it the permanent seat of the Company's power. What were the reasons which animated him in his choice we do not know, but as Mr. C. R. Wilson points out in his admirable work *The Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, it possessed valuable strategic qualities. "It could only be approached on one side. To attack it the Mogul troops must cross the river higher up and march down upon it from the North. But if the river were crossed while the English ships still dominated it, the attacking force was exposed to swift and certain destruction. The English, sending their troops up the stream, could land and assail the enemy on his march to Calcutta, cut him off from his base, force him to form front parallel to his line of communication and so place him in the most dangerous predicament in which an army can find itself."

History has abundantly vindicated the choice of the site of what was for so long the capital of India and what is still to-day its most important commercial centre. But no credit for the choice rests with those who were in authority at home. Indeed, if the short-sighted directors who

ruled the East India Company at this period could have had their way there would have been no Calcutta and very possibly no British domination in Bengal. They had for some reason or other formed a strong prejudice in favour of Chittagong, a place remote from the real seat of authority and of trade in Bengal, and when they heard of Charnock's proceedings they assailed him with a bitterness of invective more appropriate to a criminal than to an official who had risked his life and health in a gallant and not unsuccessful attempt to advance the Company's interests.

Charnock was not only abused: he was superseded. The Court sent out a fresh expedition with a new commander in the person of Captain Wm. Heath, an able navigator but a man utterly unversed in Indian ways and totally unfit by temperament for the delicate work of diplomacy which must accompany and follow any action that was to be taken.

Heath arrived at Sutanuti, or as we may now call it Calcutta, in September, 1688, and immediately proceeded to call a council to deliberate on the position. There were reasons and even authority in the Court's own communications for remaining at Calcutta; but the impetuous sailor, having made up his mind that the site was a bad one, over-ruled local opinion and by virtue of his instructions issued what were practically orders for the evacuation of the settlement. He subsequently changed his mind to some extent by opening up negotiations with Bahadur Khan, who had succeeded Shayista Khan as Nabob of the province. His overtures, made through two English representatives under Charnock's skilful advice and direction, were not unfavourably received, but

before any definite result could be reached Heath had reverted to his old idea of seeking a new site for a settlement.

Early in November, the whole of the establishment having been embarked, the long prosecuted quest assumed a new phase. Heath, who was "everything by turns, and nothing long," had only a vague idea of what he really wanted to do. His first move, delayed until towards the end of November, was to make an attack on the Mogul camp at Balasor. The action was attended with the usual success, but the troops stained their victory by excesses committed in the town against Christian and non-Christian, friend and enemy alike. Nothing much came of the affair save that the lives of the English factors, who had been imprisoned and taken up country on the landing from the ships, were placed in jeopardy. A letter received at this juncture from the Company's representatives at Dacca announcing that the Nabob was favourable to their proposals brought the policy of negotiation once more into the ascendant. But by the end of the year Heath was again on the war path. His objective this time was Chittagong. There had been some question earlier of the English helping the Moguls in a war which they were waging against the King of Arakan, and on the arrival of his fleet off the port Heath sounded the local authorities on the point. Finding that there was no desire locally to enlist his aid the English commander turned his thoughts to an attack on the town. A cool survey of the situation, however, brought home to him the extreme risks which would attend such an enterprise. Next his restless mind swung round to the idea that the King of Arakan might be used as a stalking horse for his plans. But his Majesty,

when approached, would have nothing to do with the English. This was the crowning stroke to the failure of Heath's ambitious plans, or at least he conceived it to be so. As he "could not persuade those foolish people from the present ruin and destruction which is just upon them," he gave orders for the watering of his ships preparatory to a voyage to Madras. In due course Fort St. George was reached, on the termination of one of the most singular cruises in the early history of the English in India.

Failure seemed to be written broadly across the position as it was left by this unfortunate adventure of Heath's. The foothold already obtained in Bengal had been lost, the Company's representatives everywhere in the province were in captivity, and the feud with the Mogul government had been aggravated until it menaced the Company's entire Indian trade. At the moment, however, when the sky seemed blackest it cleared in a surprising manner. The transformation was worked by the exercise of the will of Aurungzebe. The Emperor had never been greatly drawn to the English, and their recent policy had not tended to increase his regard for them. But he had been impressed by the strength that they had displayed at sea, and he reflected that if he continued at variance with them he would not only lose a lucrative source of trade but would find the route from India to the Holy Places in Arabia in the infidel's hands. He therefore issued instructions to the Nabob of Bengal that as it had been "the good fortune of the English to repent them of their irregular past proceedings and their not being in their former greatness," he was "not to create for them any further trouble, but let them trade in Bengal as formerly."

Prompt action was taken by Ibrahim Khan, the new Nabob, who had succeeded to the government of Bengal. He at once released the two English agents from their confinement and caused a message to be conveyed to Charnock informing him of the desire of the government to live in amity with the Company. The change in the Mogul attitude was so startling as to arouse a not unnatural suspicion at Madras that it veiled some deep-laid scheme of treachery. It was decided, however, after mature consideration, to take advantage of the invitation to return to Bengal. The end of August found Charnock and his associates once more installed at Calcutta, endeavouring to pick up the broken threads of a sadly disorganized trade.

Meanwhile, the authorities at home had made many important changes in the arrangements for the control of their Indian interests. In 1687 the seat of the Western Presidency was transferred from Surat to Bombay, this following upon a measure carried through six years' previously separating Bengal from Madras. It was also in this period that Sir John Child was appointed "Governor-General," with full powers in India to make peace or war. But the most significant move of all was that which was undertaken by the Company in 1689, when they issued a formal declaration in favour of territorial sovereignty. This truly momentous resolution affirmed that "the increase of our revenue is the subject of our care as much as our trade." "'Tis that," proceeded the document, "must maintain our force when twenty accidents may interrupt our trade; 'tis that must make us a nation in India. Without that we are but a great number of interlopers, united by His Majesty's royal charter, fit only to trade where

nobody of power thinks it their interest to prevent us." Here spoke the voice of true statesmanship. The purely trading era had passed away! That of the administrator had dawned.

The English never had any reason to repent their trustful action in renewing their connexion with Bengal. The Mogul Nabob was a man of peaceful and benevolent disposition, more of a student and philosopher than an administrator. He genuinely desired that there should be a lasting accommodation and used all his influence to smooth matters for the Company. It was, however, not until February 10, 1691, that what may be termed the title deeds of Calcutta were obtained by the issue of an imperial order authorizing the English to trade on the payment of Rs. 3,000 yearly in lieu of all dues.

Now the feet of the English in Bengal were on firm ground. They had what they had been long striving for, a conveniently placed headquarter settlement from which they could prosecute their trade with some assurance of freedom from irritating interference. How upon this site finally arose the vast city which ranks amongst the world's greatest capitals is a story which is part of the history of British India and need not be related here. But as in the case of Bombay, and to a lesser degree as in the case of Madras, the comparison between what was and what is affords an inspiriting exercise to all patriotic Britons. A forlorn waste for the most part when first occupied, it has become by the energy and enterprise and policy of the paramount race a populous centre of abounding wealth and prosperity. Its merchants are amongst the world's leaders of commerce; its trade touches the

four quarters of the globe; it is the home of philosophies and religions and the headquarters of a political movement which is profoundly influencing the course of events in India. If the British had done nothing else in India the creation of Calcutta on what was little better than a swamp would be a conclusive testimony to the genius of the race for the successful management of alien peoples.

Job Charnock did not live to see even the first glory of the city which he more than any other may be said to have founded. Full of years as they were reckoned for the Englishman at that time in India, and weighed down with the cares and responsibilities of his position, he died on January 10, 1693, in Calcutta. He was buried in St. John's Churchyard in the city in a grave which is said to contain also the remains of his much loved Indian wife, who predeceased him. Some four years after his death his son-in-law, Charles Eyre, erected over the tomb an elaborate mausoleum, which was the receptacle of the bodies of a number of his descendants who died in the latter part of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century. This striking structure still stands, an object of interest to the curious visitor to Calcutta and a silent reminder of one to whom the city owes so much.

Few men of note in the early annals of British India have been the subject of acuter controversy than Job Charnock. Even before his death there had gathered about him a wealth of picturesque legend which distinguished him from the ordinary type of English adventurer of that day. As Chanak, a master mind who had by his almost superhuman powers defeated the Mogul forces at Hooghly, he

had figured in Hindu tradition. The native imagination was impressed by his forceful qualities and also probably was not less influenced by the depth of his insight into Oriental ways. Amongst his fellow countrymen Charnock excited different feelings. He had many detractors, especially in his later days, when the advances of age and the effects of nearly forty years' continuous residence in the tropics appear to have developed in him an irritability of manner and an apathetic indifference which produced evil results in the government. Those who followed him, and knew little of his earlier services, were not slow to depreciate his abilities, representing him as a very commonplace type of man who had been installed in a position for which he was little fitted either by talents or temperament. There was this amount of truth in the picture that Charnock was ill educated and plain of appearance and speech. His natural defects had probably been accentuated by an almost entire separation from European society during the greater part of his career. But that he was the cross-grained incompetent that he was represented to be by his immediate successors is not at all in accordance with the known facts of his history. These show him to have been a man of strong integrity and of shrewd judgment, eminently courageous not merely in the physical but in the higher and rarer moral sense. He was loyal to his employers in a period when the most lax views obtained as to the dictates of duty, and with that loyalty was mingled a zeal for his country's honour which was a brand of the purest patriotism. Time has done much to clear his memory from the aspersions of jealous and evil-minded contemporaries. He is seen now in truer perspective, as a man whose little personal failings were over-

laid by sterling qualities and whose administrative shortcomings paled beneath the grandeur of achievements which have left an indelible mark on the history of the nation's relations with the East.

CHAPTER XXI

The Adventurers and their Times

The passing of the era of adventure—The early English communities in the East—How they lived—Their religious observances—The first Indian convert—The pomp observed by the chief officials—Their dress—Few Englishmen in India—Drinking habits of the men—Literary tastes—What expatriation to the East meant in the seventeenth century—The debt Britain owes to the early adventurers

WHEN the three great centres of British influence in India had been definitely fixed a new era was entered upon in which life ran in more regular channels. Adventures there were for the adventurous as there always will be in India while "the East is East and the West is West"; but the struggle of the race towards their settled destiny assumed a distinctly new phase which carried it away from the arena in which it had hitherto irregularly been prosecuted. Men now played their part on a mightier stage with more or less definitely assigned parts. They were the leaders of armies and the makers and unmakers of kingdoms; they organized the rule of provinces and they settled the fate of dynasties; they were builders rather than prospectors or pioneers. It may, perhaps, even be questioned whether the greatest of them—Clive, Hastings, and the rest of their brilliant contemporaries—were adventurers in the fullest sense of the term. Like their congeners of a later generation they were the chosen in-

struments of a settled order for the execution of its decrees on lines which were fairly fixed. Romantic as their lives were in many respects they were a class apart from the merchant adventurers whose careers are traced in the preceding pages.

Not the least interesting feature of the century of which we have treated was the gradual growth of these English communities in the East which in some cases formed the germs of the great ports and cities of our own time. Established in the first instance by a mere handful of the Company's servants—occasionally by not more than a half dozen—the factories, if well placed, grew in importance until the staff was a complete organization, including the various grades of functionaries into which the covenanted body was divided, the whole representing a fairly large colony. They lived together in the factory, which was usually a roomy building with sleeping apartments grouped about a common room. The latter served the double purpose of a dining hall and a council chamber, and it was also made to do duty as a chapel until the time arrived when the community became large enough to justify the provision of a special room or building for devotional purposes. An appendage of some of the factories and notably of that at Surat, was a beautiful garden in a pleasant situation where in the cool of the evening the exiles might pass a congenial hour or two amid the fruit and the flowers, before partaking of the evening meal.

Religious observances were strictly enjoined upon their servants by the directors, who made special provision for the due execution of their orders in this respect by sending out chaplains to the principal establishments and in arranging for the service of lay readers in cases where

the staff was a small one. Some of the appointments, like that of the Rev. Peter Rogers, the first of the regular chaplains, whose vagaries have already been referred to, were not happy. But on the other hand there were amongst these early clerical representatives men who were in every way a credit to their cloth. In this category deservedly may be included the Rev. Patrick Copeland, who went out to India a year or two after Rogers. He is described in a letter to the directors of the period by one of its principal agents in India as one "whose virtuous life suiting so well with his sound doctrine is a means of bringing men unto God." Not the least of Copeland's claims to a place in the early history of the English in the East is that he made the first Indian convert that the Anglican Church can claim. This was a Bengali youth whose acquaintance Copeland formed in the course of his travels. The lad was taken to England by his patron and publicly baptized at the Church of St. Dionis, Backchurch, Fenchurch Street, on December 22, 1616, in the name of Peter, to which, according to some accounts, King James added the surname of Pope. Subsequently the Indian Peter returned to his native land, to drop once more into obscurity. Copeland, whose later career was spent in the West Indies, died in the Bermudas.

The ordinary life of the Eastern factories ran on rather rigid lines. Usually the day commenced with prayers at 6 a.m. Afterwards was a light informal breakfast, analogous to the *chota hazri*, or "little breakfast" of the Anglo-Indian of to-day. At midday was the dinner, a substantial meal to which the members of the establishment sat down in the strict order of precedence, the chief agent and the members of his council at a top table, and

the factors and writers and others in their due positions at a lower table. The various dishes were washed down with Spanish or Shiraz wine with, as a welcome accompaniment on most days, pale punch made of brandy, rose water, citron juice and sugar. Tea was also served at the meals and extensively consumed. On Sundays and days of high festival game was added to the menu and the toasts of the King and the Company were given, followed by the healths of every one present, down to the most junior official. The evening meal was on more frugal lines. It was followed by conversation, which sometimes became so animated as to call for the intervention of the seniors. At nine o'clock the gates of the factory were closed. An hour later the entire establishment was wrapped in slumber.

A great deal of pomp marked the incoming and outgoing of those in authority in the factory. As early as 1623 the agent at Surat, when he made his public appearances, was preceded by a banner and a saddle horse and was attended by a native company composed of men armed with swords and bows and arrows and bearing shields. Later the practice was improved upon, and the merchant adventurers when they went abroad did so in regular procession. At the head of the line went a silk flag—the national emblem—followed by a body of musicians and the chief agent's Arab horses in state trappings. Then came the great man himself, reclining in luxurious ease in a palankeen borne upon the shoulders of four orderlies with two others as reliefs behind. A considerable body of native servants in scarlet uniforms followed. Behind them were the members of council in large coaches drawn by oxen. The tail of the procession was formed by the

junior officials, some on horseback, some in carriages. Even the ordinary movements of the members of the staff were strictly regulated. The chief and the second in rank had palankeens at their disposal, and the other members of the council, with the chaplain, were honoured by having an umbrella borne above them when they left the factory. The less favoured mortals were denied these conveniences with a stern regard for the native laws of etiquette, which demanded that authority should be marked in this special way.

In the matter of dress the Englishman, at the outset at all events, largely adhered to their European garb. Roe made a special point of this during his embassy, under the rightful supposition that he was more likely to win respect by observing his national customs as far as possible than by masquerading in native costume. He probably set the fashion in this matter, for, for a generation at least, broadcloth was the only wear of the Englishman on ceremonial occasions. It must have been a terrible infliction in the sweltering days of the Indian hot season to move about in the thick heavy garments which the fashion of the day decreed, and it was doubtless with a sense of what was due to comfort and health that as the century progressed a more rational style of dress was introduced, the English cloth giving place to the indigenous calico. Wigs, too, were largely discarded, though those high in authority continued to cling to them as adjuncts which lent their personalities additional impressiveness in the eyes of the natives. That there was something in this theory was shown about the end of the century when a Sumatran queen before whom a deputation of officials from Madras attended was so attracted by the wigs that she was not

satisfied until they had been taken off and handed up to her for her inspection.

Until towards the end of the century no Englishwomen were permitted by the Company to share the exile of its servants. At the time of Roe's embassy much trouble arose through a sudden irruption of Englishwomen—Steele's wife and another—upon the factories at Surat and Ahmedabad. In his irritation at the disturbance of his peace, for which the ladies were responsible, the ambassador, strongly urged the directors to prohibit their servants from having their wives in India with them. This ungallant advice was followed, with the consequence that until the door was practically forced by the establishment and growth of permanent settlements the single roof of the factory covered the entire English community. The distant wives, however, were not forgotten. Mandelslo, the Italian traveller who visited Surat about the year 1638, notes that at the English factory it was the custom of the leading functionaries at dinner to drink to their wives in England.

It is not remarkable that in the absence of the refining and restraining influence of women social customs in these early settlements should have degenerated largely into drinking customs. "There is a general complaint that we drink a damnable deal of wine this year," wrote Thomas Pitt at the close of the seventeenth century. He was doubtless well within the mark as excess is written large over all the records of the Company of this period. But it was not the wine which worked the mischief so much as the poisonous decoction known as arrack punch, manufactured from the raw native spirit. The deadly effects of this compound upon the early English com-

munities are testified to by Bernier and other writers who visited India at this period. In the case of seamen especially it was a fruitful source of mortality as it is unfortunately still to-day amongst the careless Jacks of the mercantile marine who are stranded for a period in one or other of the great Indian ports.

If Bacchus was at times unduly worshipped the gods of learning and literature were not entirely neglected. There is evidence in the correspondence of the period that men kept up their acquaintance with the classics, and that they took a real pleasure in intellectual pursuits. At the Surat factory, quite early in its history, a library was formed with the Company's assistance. The collection of books furnished was, perhaps, not exactly of the kind which would have appealed to the tastes of the average man. What it was like may be gathered from a communication from Sir George Oxenden to the directors in the year 1666. "Your library here," wrote the President, "is carefully looked after and preserved, and we could wish it were better furnished with books. It consists for the main of English treatises and is almost totally defurnisht of the works of the ancient writers. We find none of the Fathers' works, any more than the Epistles of Clemens Romanus. Here are Epistles of Ignatius. The works of Epiphanius and St. Augustine, with some imperfect pieces of other Fathers, only belonging to a private library."

The suggestion made as to the deficiencies of this Surat library conveys rather a terrifying impression of the reading tastes of that far-off Anglo-India. Nor does it appear that addiction to "heavy" literature was a peculiarity of the generation of exiles to which Sir George Oxenden

belonged. In 1720—to take a year a little beyond the period at which our narrative in the main closes—there was sold "by public outcry" at Anjengo, the birthplace of Sterne's Eliza, the following books belonging to different persons: Coles' *English and Latin Dictionary, The Worthies of Devon*, Tillotson's *Works, Government of the Tongue*, Atkinson's *Epiphany, The History of the World*, 2nd volume of *The Tatler, Art of Self Government, The Present State of England, Cæsar's Commentaries* and Moll's *Geography*. Here is a decidedly miscellaneous list, far removed for the most part from the reading of the ordinary Englishman of to-day who lives in the East. It must be remembered, however, that when these books were sold Pamela had only just been born, that Clarissa Harlowe was still to arrive—that, in fact, the modern novel had yet to be created.

It is difficult to part with the old era without a pang of regret. It was a spacious age in which great things were accomplished with scanty means and in the face of enormous difficulties. Only men of the finest fibre could have passed, as most of our heroes did, successfully through the ordeals which marked their careers. Though all were traders, intent on commercial gain, they could at times rise to the loftiest heights of self-abnegation in the interests of their country. We cannot in these days, perhaps, realize to the fullest extent the sacrifice that most of them made. Expatriation to the East had an added terror in that period when the voyage was oftentimes an odyssey of disease and misfortune and when a comparatively small proportion of those who went out to fill assigned positions ever returned home. There were none of the luxuries which now make life in the tropics tolerable to the

European, and there were few of the plain comforts which to-day are regarded as absolutely indispensable to healthy existence. It was for many a life of dull heart-breaking monotony, varied only by the visitations of disease or the vicissitudes incidental to the precarious relations in which the English stood to the native powers in whose territory they resided.

This work has been written in vain if it does not show how much Britain owes to these men and more especially to the leaders, who by their devotion and heroic self-sacrifice gave such a splendid impetus to the cause of national expansion. Lancaster, Courthope, Jourdain, Middleton, Downton—these are names worthy to rank with those of the seamen of the earlier generation who won fame on the Western main, and they will compare not unfavourably with the naval heroes who in a later age secured for Britain the mastery of the sea and with it the consolidation of her overseas possessions. They are of the immortal company of whom Tennyson sang in his memorable lines :—

> "We sail'd wherever ship could sail;
> We founded many a mighty state;
> Pray God our greatness may not fail
> Through craven fear of being great."

And of the prominent figures who played their part on land in this overture to the great drama of British dominion in the East may we not also say that they too are of the body of the elect—true Empire builders? Though their deeds were not so spectacular as those of the great administrators and soldiers of subsequent centuries, Oxenden, Aungier and Charnock were worthies whose achievements we cannot overlook in appraising the human forces which assisted to build up the British-Indian Empire.

But when all has been said that can be said of the work of the early adventurers something is left for explanation as to the causes which produced the wonderful results which are seen visibly shaping in the immediately preceding chapters. England, beaten, humiliated, discredited in Eastern Asia, turns her face to India. Her resources are limited, her prestige is lower than at any period in her recent history, and she has almost lost faith in herself amid the misfortunes of a period of internal conflict and subsequent degeneracy of national morals and instincts; and yet in spite of all she steadily marks out for herself the lines upon which in the next century she advances—as regards her European rivals—to an impregnable position on the Indian peninsula. Can we account for this except by a reference to those higher influences which govern our lives? As "there's a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will," so in the working of that miracle, the establishment of British rule in India, may we not see the finger of Providence?

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